



## **Claims Conference Holocaust Survivor Memoir Collection**

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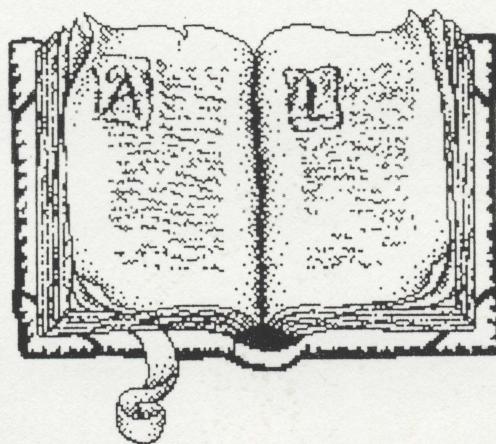
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*My Own Recollections  
of  
World War II*

*by*

*Bernhard Storch*



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811  
5848  
2004

These memories are my recollections of growing up in Poland, and with dedication and love for my family, country, and fellow human, survival during World War II, and hardship endured at times in the Siberian Slave Labor Camp.

As a Volunteer, Frontline Soldier with the First Infantry Polish Division, named Tadeusz Kosciuszko, and as a member of the Non-Commissioned Academy.

As a leader of a 122mm Howitzer Cannon, dueling with tanks,, and street battles in Berlin, Germany, in May 1945, with safety and responsibility to my fellow soldiers and officers, and the role my Jewish Faith played believing in God, and the success my Battery had during the military operations.

Please enjoy reading this book, and pass it on to the next generation.

Bernhard Storch

PII Redacted



LATVIA

BALTIC SEA

LITHUANIA

EAST PRUSSIA  
(GERMANY)

Niemen

Niemenczyn  
Nowa-Wilejka  
Smorgonie

Vilna  
Wołożyn

Grajewo  
Łomża

Jeziory  
Grodno  
Białystok  
Świesłoc  
Zabłudów

Wolda

Wolkowysk

Baranowicze

Nowogródek

Mir

Gdańsk  
Bydgoszcz  
Vistula

Włocławek  
Dobrzyn nad Wisłą

Nowe Miasto

Płońsk

Nasielsk

Wolomin

Jabłonna

Warsaw

Miedzeszyn

Mińsk Mazowiecki

Otwock

Córa Kalwaria

Łaskarzew

Maciejowice

Dęblin

Wawolnica

Lublin

Kazimierz nad Wisłą

Annopol

Hrubieszów

Zamość

Łuck

Jeziory Żydowskie

Krzemieniec

Brody

Równe

Ostrogi

Klesów

Pińsk

Prześe nad Bugiem

Prypeć

Łachwa

Wysock

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Pińsk

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Prypeć

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GERMANY

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

U.S.S.R.

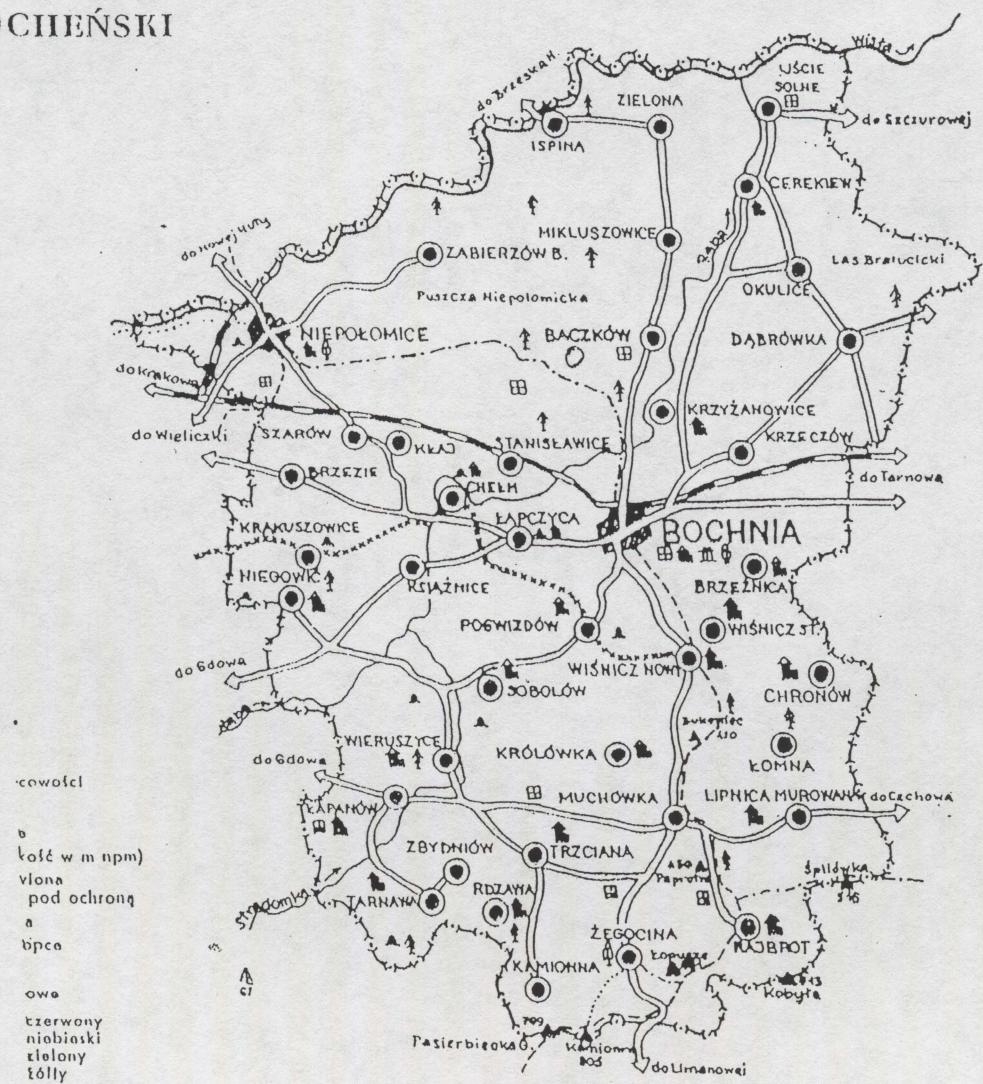
RUMANIA



THE SECOND POLISH REPUBLIC 1921-1939

ĐCIEŃSKI

## CITY BOCHNIA AND VICINITY



Al Gore  
Vice President of the U.S.A.  
White house  
Washington, DC 200050

Cape May Aug.6,1994

Dear Sir,

I am very sorry to have missed the trip with you to Poland on Saturday July 30, 1994.

On July 26, 1994 I received a telephone call on behalf of the White House from miss Amy Zissok, requesting from me a short biography. In all seriousness, I ask her is this a joke, she replied no but it is very important. Miss Zissok did not reviled for what purpose it was.

I faxed the biography on Tuesday July 27,1994 to Miss Zissok, and the White House address.

I had no idea then that it was for the upcoming trip to Poland. My own vacation was scheduled for Friday July 29, 1994, and I left that morning at 10:30 AM for Cape May New Jersey.

At about 8 PM on Friday July, 1994, I received a telephone call from the Presidential Office by Miss Weiskoff, very apologetic and sincere, that I was included in the delegation.

It would have been a great honor to be with You Sir and to represent our Country the United States of America.

Having been born in Poland, and having had lost my entire family during World War Two, to the Nazi Concentration Camps of Aushwitz and Belzec, having had volunteered to serve in the Polish Army during World War two and participated in the liberation of four Concentration Camps three in Poland and one in Germany just 35 miles from Berlin, having had received Six Medals among them Three Crosses from President of Poland Mr. Lech Walesa The last one on April 17, 1994 at the Polish Consulate in New York City, a Cross For Bravery and Gallantry in the Field of Glory awarded me on March 1945, in East Prussia, Germany, it would have been my greatest honor to be with You Sir and honor all fallen civilians and soldiers during this terrible war.

I am very sorry for the missed communication. If I had been notified as late as Friday morning July 29, I would have canceled my vacation, and would join You Sir. It was impossible for me to drive back to New City, N.Y. and to be on time for the ( P.M. ) departure on Saturday July 30, 1994 from Washington, DC.

I am sincerely grateful to You Sir for inviting me and for representing our Country so well, and for working so hard for Peace .Democracy and justice on our behalf. Please don't hesitate to call on me when time arrives.

Bernhard Storch

Respectfully Yours

PII Redacted

Bernhard Storch



THE VICE PRESIDENT  
WASHINGTON

September 21, 1994

Mr. Bernhard Storch

PII Redacted

Dear Mr. Storch:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding my visit last month to Warsaw, Poland, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw uprising. Most of all, thank you for the important role that you played in liberating the concentration camps and saving so many lives years ago. I was saddened to read that your family was not saved.

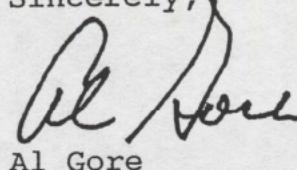
In addition, I very much regret that you were unable to join me on my trip to Poland. Unfortunately, the details of the trip were not confirmed until late Friday--the reason for the late call--and so, of course, there were others like yourself who could not participate in this historic trip.

I was honored to have the opportunity to join in commemorating the deceased as well as the survivors of the gallant fight against the tyranny of the Nazi Wehrmacht. While we will forever be indebted to those courageous freedom fighters for their heroism and sacrifice, the ceremony also served as a time for putting past hostilities aside and instead forging a world in which our children can live without fear or hatred. It was for this that the Polish fighters of 1944 died--for liberty and for human dignity for themselves and for generations to come.

I am sure that you share this Administration's desire to see a Poland in which tolerance, mutual forgiveness, and hope preside and in which all Polish citizens can dwell together in peace.

Again, thank you for your thoughtful letter.

Sincerely,



Al Gore

AG\kkw



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT  
UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY  
WEST POINT, NEW YORK 10996-5000

August 30, 2004

Mr. Bernhard Storch

PII Redacted

Dear Mr. Storch:

Congratulations on being elected the New York State Commander of the Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America. This fine organization will benefit from your leadership and counsel.

I have sent the copy of your memoirs, My Recollections of World War II, to the Librarian to be added to the collection. This book will remain in the Library for the inspiration of the cadets and faculty of the Military Academy. Thank you for sending it to us.

Best wishes from West Point.

Sincerely,

William J. Lennox, Jr.  
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army  
Superintendent

*New City Jewish Center*

HENRY A. SOSLAND  
Rabbi

OLD SCHOOLHOUSE ROAD • NEW CITY, NEW YORK 10566

PHONE (914) 634-6140  
634-3619

August 25, 1987

Dear Bernie,

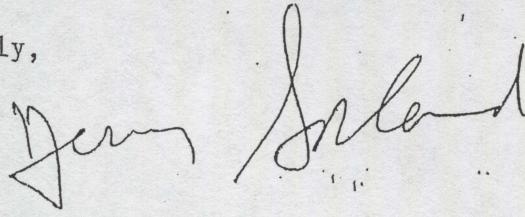
I just concluded some weeks of being on vacation, and one of the special pleasures I had over that time was reading your account of the war years as you spent them between 1939 and 1945. Yours is a fascinating and moving story that gives me a whole new insight into the kind of person that you are. You underwent several lifetimes of experience and challenges in those years.

We are so proud to have you and Ruth in our community. We always felt that you were especially fine and kind and gentle and concerned for people. After reading your memoirs, I also know that you are extremely courageous and a leader among men and a person that has earned the respect of so many fellow human beings. Bernie, I am sure that Gita and Larry and their families recognize the fantastic spirit that went into all that you did, and is so evident in your writing. They have a father and grandfather that is an extraordinary man. I say this with no exaggeration. After reading all that you encountered, I stand in awe of you and your many many achievements.

I shall be returning the memoirs to you very soon, but I wanted to put in writing my appreciation, my deep thanks to you for sharing it with me.

With warmest regards to Ruth and all of the Storch family,

Fondly,



THE

WAVE

YEARS



National Museum of  
American Jewish Military History

1811 R Street NW Washington, DC

Bernhard Storch

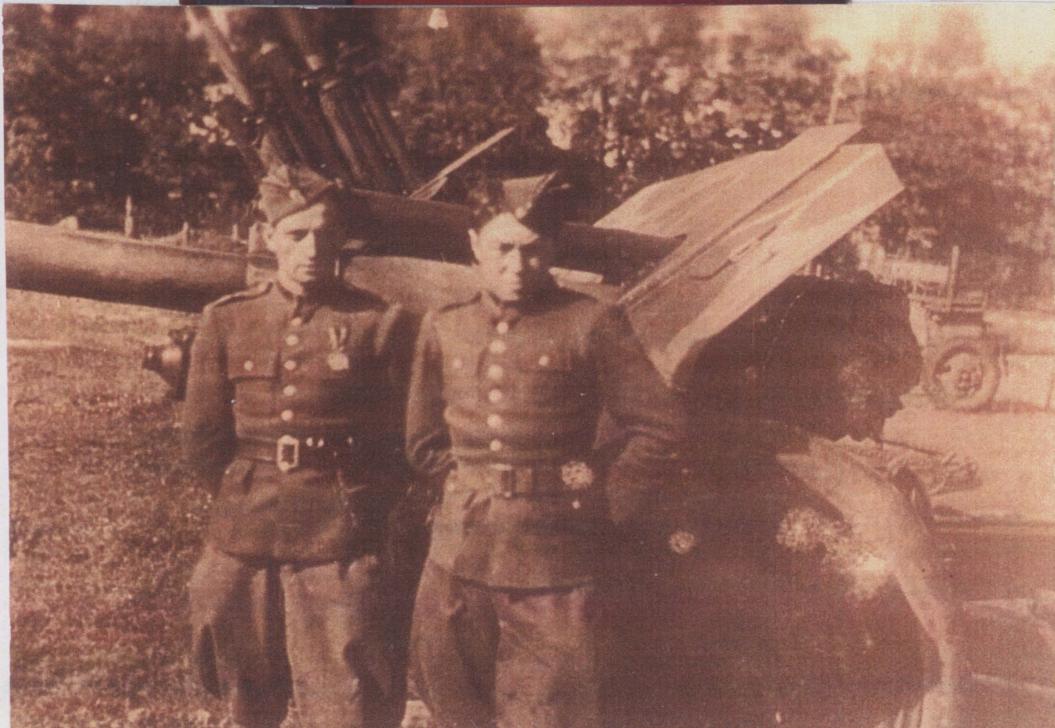


My peace time Polish uniform with a four corner Polish hat adorned by the Eagle the National icon.

In the background on the Right, is the original certificate for the liberation of the Capital of Poland City Warsaw On January 18, 1945.

Below is the only photo I have from World War II taken by a member of my communication unit in November 1943, near the Katin Forests in the region of Smolensk, Central Russia, he did not survive the war.

On the left is Kpl. Abram Urbaitel From Ludz, Poland, assign to my Battery communication unit. On the right myself with my 122 mm Howitzer cannon.





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Dedication

This is my own account from World War Two, dedicated to my children, Gita Helen and Larry Gerald, and their families, in memory of my parents, my three brothers, my grandparents, all my relatives, all my cousins, my schoolmates and friends, who perished in the Holocaust during World War Two. And to all the men and women who fought so heroically to defeat the Nazi regime.

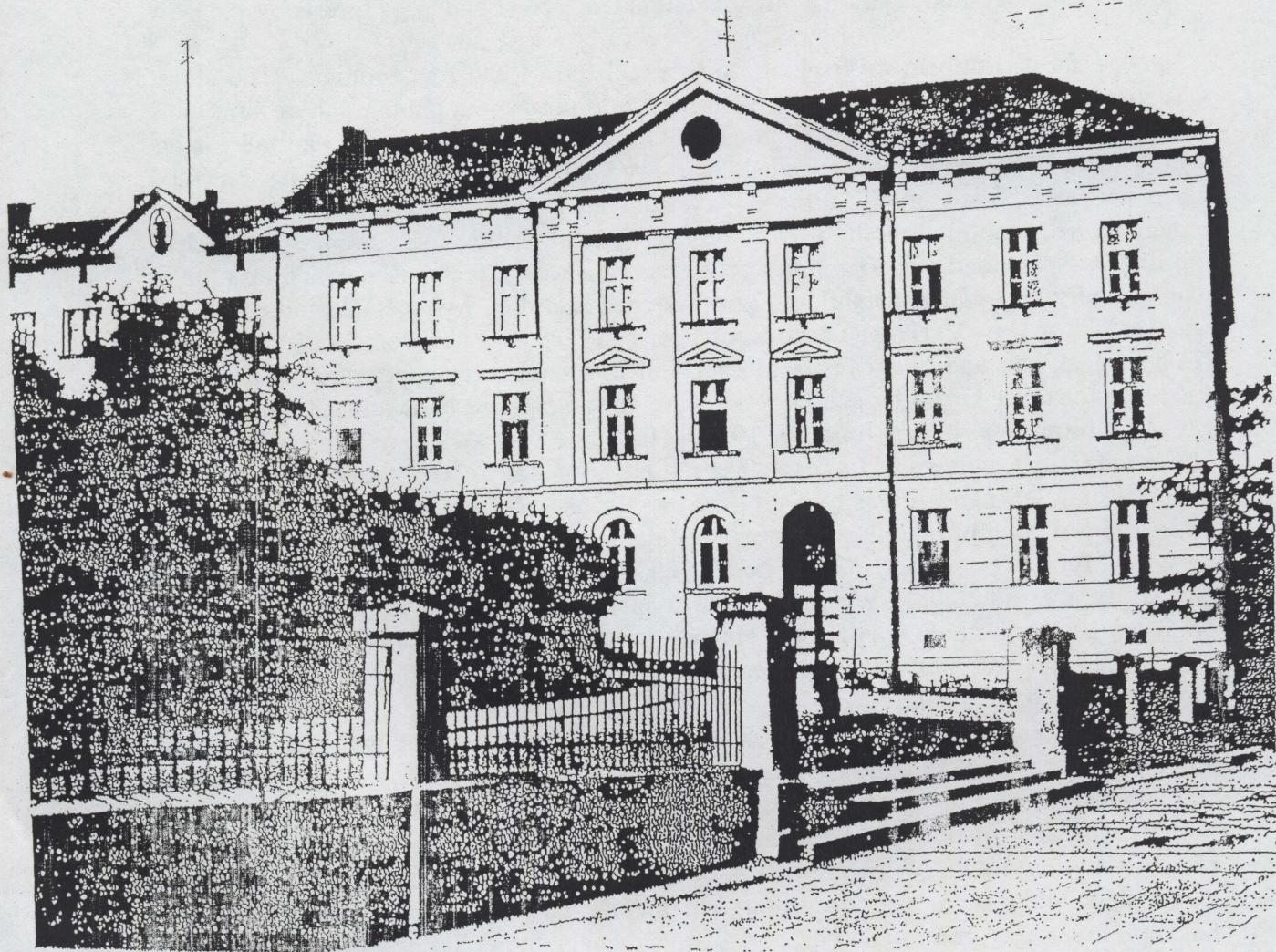
Your father, Bernhard Storch  
April 4, 1985  
New City, N.Y. 10956

Bernhard Storch, 1997





This is the school I attended until June 1937. This school was for boys only located on the 4 Mickiewicza Street, Bochnia, Poland.



I was born in a small city, population twenty thousand people, of whom three thousand were Jews. The rest of the population was Catholic. Geographically this city is located in the southern part of Poland. The nearest large city is the historic city of Krakow, the capital of this region, only 33 km. away. The big well-known attraction throughout Europe was and still is a salt mine, the second largest in Europe. Legend has it that the mine was discovered by Jadwiga, a Polish Queen. A beautiful chapel carved from salt was there at the bottom of the mine. Besides the mine there were all kinds of small industries, wine breweries, agriculture farms, cattle and horses were raised near by. As for education, we had three public schools, two high schools, two colleges, and one seminary. There were also two military regiments and all kinds of retail shops and factories. This city is located on a hillside, circled by a river and large forests.

So far as I remember growing up was real fun. I had four brothers. The oldest was Joseph who was two years older than me. I do not have a photograph of him, but I will never forget his face. He was good looking, blond with blue eyes, and tall for his age. He was very bright and excellent in every subject in school. So it was very sad when he passed away in my arms on a Friday in March of 1932 at 11 a.m. As I remember he got injured on the way home from school, falling from a horse-drawn sled, injuring his spine, and developing tuberculosis. That was a terrible shock and loss to the whole family, especially the children who watched him die. My second brother's name was Dudek, or David. He was born December 6, 1924, very handsome, tall for his age. He had black hair and blue eyes, also excellent in school, very popular and bright. He used to tutor other kids after school. We were very close and he is still in my memory. My third brother was born June 10, 1927. His name was Wilek, or William. He was blond with curly hair and blue eyes, very pretty little boy. He was left-handed. In Europe being left-handed was a small disaster because you were not permitted to write with your left hand in school. Of course, my parents tried to discourage him, and it was very hard for this poor child. Then, he also had the habit to suck on his finger, and this created another situation. We really had to pity him, and he was so adorable. My youngest brother's name was Leon. He was born July 15, 1931. He was blond with brown eyes and everyone loved him. After all, he was the youngest. The last time I saw him he was eight years old.

As far as I remember there were no animosities between us, and I do not recall any black eyes or broken bones. Well, it was safe to play outside those days for all ages, and parents did not fear to let them go and be by themselves. Children were preoccupied with making their own toys and inventing their own games. We were fortunate to have a river nearby, the Raba, which merged into the largest river in Poland, the River Wisla. So in the summer there was swimming and fishing, and in the winter, ice-skating and hockey. I was very good in soccer, and always managed to be on my schools first team. So as you can see, as children growing up was a lot of fun.

As for our parents, that was another story. Life was very hard for them, especially from 1933 to the end. My father lost lots of business investments, and it was a real struggle from them on. But there was a large family on my Mother's side, so when the

going was rough they always pitched in if necessary and helped each other out. European life was completely different than in the U.S.A., and to my knowledge there was no welfare, and families always helped each other out. We had a beautiful family, lots of friends, good neighbors, when tragedy struck again. My father got very ill, and after seven months he passed away from lung illness or cancer. My mother, my grandfather, Uncle David, a physician, and I were at his side, and the time was 6 a.m. on a Tuesday, three weeks before the High Holidays in 1937. He was then forty-three years old. It was a very large funeral attended a lot of people from both sides of the religion because my father was liked by all. During World War One he served as an officer in the Austrian Army. He was seriously wounded through the lungs. You could always see the spot when he took off his shirt. He was highly decorated for his bravery and as children we admired his medals. So it was a terrible shock for my mother to overcome this tragedy, and of course for the children and the whole family.

When I graduated from public school I immediately started to apprentice as a plumber, 45 kilometers away from home. I traveled each morning by train starting at 6 a.m. to the large city of Tarnow, but after three months I had to give up that profession because it was just too hard for me. In the evening you had to continue with your education three times a week. Upon coming to myself, Uncle Moniek persuaded my mother to send me to him, and live with him, his wife Lena, and their little daughter Rose, who was one year old. By the way Aunt Lena was Uncle Roberts youngest sister. Lena, Moniek, and Rose did not survive the war. So from October 1937 to September 1939 I lived in Silesia, some 130 kilometers away from home, or three and half hours away by train. At times I was very lonely and very sad. That was the first time I had left home and I missed them all very much.

1939-1945

September 1, 1939

I was awakened in the middle of the night with a lot of activities outside, and there I was all by myself, in this large apartment, at the age of sixteen. There was no one to turn to for advice because all my relatives were on vacation. We suspected something the day before, and I was prepared for the worst. On August 30 I saw six German soldiers captured and marched through the city streets. For days the city government was busy packing and moving mountains of boxes out of the city. The city is Chorzow. Before the Silesia Revolution in 1922 it was named Koenigshutte. It was a large industrial center whose main product was coal and steel, and this city was located three miles from the German border. This region was much fought over, both for its riches and its location. At this time my object was to leave this home, which belonged to Uncle Moniek and his family. They were vacationing and visiting my mother and grandparents some 130 kilometers away. I was apprenticed to my uncle, a master tailor with an excellent business employing about half a dozen people. In Europe you had to apprentice for three years. At home, were my mother and my three brothers, Dudek, age fourteen, Wilek, age twelve, and Leon age eight. I was sixteen.

At that time I was in charge of the entire place and I had to make a decision in a hurry. There was a lot of military activity and lack of transportation. I could not get in touch with my uncle, all phone lines were busy or disrupted. I telephoned the railroad station in Katowice, which is ten kilometers from here. Katowice is the capital of this beautiful Silesian region. I was told then that there was no time-table available, and that the last train will depart east at 1:30 p.m., situation permitting. So, I packed my suitcase, locked the door, and left, not knowing then that this would be the last time I would ever see this beautiful place, located only one block from the largest steel mine in Europe. After the war I tried to enter the building to see if there was anything left from the contents of this apartment, but I could not enter because the Russians took over the building for their headquarters.

Normally this trip from Katowice to Krakow takes two and a half hours but there was nothing normal about this trip. The train was under constant bombardment by low flying planes, strafing with automatic fire anything that moved. People were running for shelter, for there were dead bodies all over. Finally, after a day and a half I made it to Krakow. But the engineer had the order to abandon the train. I was just about to leave the train station, this time without my suitcase, which had gotten lost in the shuffle, when I saw a freight train headed in an easterly direction. I took a chance and got on it. As soon as the train left the station I knew that the train was on the proper course. At that time I was only 33 kilometers from home, but it took me a day and a night to get there. I was tired and half-starved. The date was September 3, 1939. My ordeal was just about to begin. The Germans were getting closer and closer. A decision made by my uncles (David and Sam), their families, and the Neumark family, who provided a wagon and two horses. They were going to leave the city of Bochnia and drive 23 kilometers east to a town named Szczurowa, located on the river Wisla. It was considered safe at that time,

and we assumed that the German army would not be able to cross the river, which was deep at this time. My mother decided that at the age of sixteen I was more vulnerable than the younger children and I should go along with my uncles. Everyone was sure that the Germans would be beaten in a matter off days. There were rumors that the military army would form another defensive line and take every young person available. Just as there were rumors that should the Germans win they would do the same, after occupation. Little did we know then.

As soon as we got under way we found that a lot of other people had the same idea, including the Polish Army. Again, the Germans were bombarding at everything that moved. There were bodies all over. In the meantime feed for the horses was running low and the horses were tired, and we were not sure where we were going. After two weeks the situation looked critical. It seemed as if the whole country was on the run with the Germans in pursuit. By the third week we reached the capital of the Polish-Ukraine, the city of Lwow. It was a large city and not far from the soviet border. The situation did not improve. There were rumors that the Soviet Army would attack from the east and finish off the Polish Army, and reclaim the part of the Ukraine that they lost to Poland during World War One. Those rumors turned out to be true. The Soviet Union made a pact with Germany, and for Poland the war was over. It had lasted twenty-seven days.

We were now on Soviet territory; the city was full of refugees. Somehow we were able to get a small apartment, if you can call it that. There was one large room and a bathroom, no furniture, and we slept on the floor. We, meaning myself, Uncle Sam, Aunt Mona, about three months later Uncle Adolf and Aunt Berta, after a few weeks cousin Isaac, Uncle Isaac, and your mother. In the same building were the Neumark family and Aunt Ceska and Uncle David. They also had the same place as ours. Also in Lwow was Uncle Max, his wife, and five year old son Daniel. They did not survive the war. Winter was approaching fast in this part of the country, with lots of snow and very cold, and our spirits were low. There was very little food and we had little in the way of clothing. Yet, as we adjusted and after awhile we were able to write our families. At that time they were doing better than we did. Finally, winter was over. Meanwhile, the Soviets signed a non-aggression pact with Germany. Soon after that we were told that there is a commission to register anyone who wanted to return home. We had all decided to register. Long lines formed at the registration point and we soon found that we had been tricked. There was no commission there and nobody was going home. All the Russians wanted was to find out how many of us there were, and where we were living. First they took single people like Cousin Isaac. I was too young for them.

Then they came for us. It was at midnight, June 1940, the Russian police and N.K.V.D. went from house to house and loaded us on trucks and took us all to the railroad station. There we were loaded onto cattle cars. The doors were locked from the outside. There were no windows and we had no idea where we were going, but Siberia was a good bet. We had been traveling for about a day and a half when the train stopped. The doors were opened and we saw that we were in a remote area. There were no people to be seen except for the N.K.V.D. guards guarding the train. We had gotten food and water, but anybody trying to strike up a conversation looked at pointed bayonets.

The trip took us about three weeks. One day the doors opened and we were at the end of our journey. We had arrived in the middle of a forest, with mosquitoes the size of bees. Our faces, legs, and arms were soon swollen from mosquito bites. We spent the first night in the railroad cars. Next morning we disembarked. Our new home had no name, just a number, Tenth Kilometer. That is how far it was to the next settlement. On our arrival the first impression I got was a simple silence and deep thoughts of this dreadful place. We had been relocated to a slave labor camp. The only industry was forestry. We were ordered to build a new city from those tall trees. We were lodged in small, dilapidated houses. Each had four rooms with one communal kitchen. Sixteen people were assigned to this house. To my best recollection in this small house there were eight different families. People were sleeping everywhere. There was no electricity, no running water, no heat except for a wood burning stove. We had to chop the wood to keep it burning twenty-four hours a day. There was one communal bathhouse and each building had an assigned time for bathing. We started to work in the early morning darkness and we finished in darkness. There was very little food to be had and in the beginning we were not allowed to leave this camp at all. To and from the job, we were escorted by N.K.V.D. guards. On the job civilian Russians took over and they taught us how to handle those trees and how to prepare them for shipment.

The commander of this camp was a stone-faced N.K.V.D. man by the name of Smirnov, who never smiled and simply looked right through you. He kept asking people the names of their hometowns, and then he would say, you will build this town here and it will be your home forever. We were in a restricted area, nobody in and nobody out. We all told him that we had done nothing wrong to deserve such a harsh treatment. But there was no answer to our questions. Eventually we learned from some of our guards that we had been labeled German spies.

We were allowed a few days to settle in. Old people, the sick, and women with small children were excused. Everyone else, if you do not work you do not eat. So we worked hard and lost a lot of weight. After about six months an official came from Moscow with some new orders. Overnight there was a complete turnaround. The guards greeted us with a smile, the food got better, and we were also given passes to town from time to time, but you had to report back to the officer in charge. This raised our morale and gave us hope. So, day after day we did the same routine. We did not have any recreation, newspaper, or radio, no movies, no books. Yet our morale was high and no one had given in. Practically everyone survived this camp, except for a few. We were never abused or called bad names. Things loosened up after that and we were allowed to write postcards home. I received in all two postcards from my mother and my brothers. Thank God, so far they were O.K. For months the Germans were creating ghettos. Rumors persisted that the Soviet Union will go to war against Germany. All kinds of preparations were made, even we were treated better. Eventually it happened a couple of months later, the date was June 22, 1941.

At the camp we were cutting down trees and we were told that they will be used to build bridges, ships, supports for coal mines, and all necessary things to fight the

enemy. Winters were very long and very cold, lasting from October till May. The snow never stopped. The temperature dropped to sixty below zero. We had to work in fifty-five below. I remember one night I was loading railroad cars and every one had frozen cheeks, noses, fingers, and every thing exposed.

Actually, the Russian people are very warm and they will share with you as much as they have. They admired us for standing our ground not to be broken. The Soviet citizen was very fearful of the authorities because the government did not hesitate to put you away for the smallest infraction and there was not one Soviet family that I came across that at one time or another did not have a member in a slave labor camp. The majority of the people in the area of this camp were Marijans. I actually could not find the history of these people. They were very primitive. They did not speak Russian, except for their leaders. Mostly they were old, or they looked old to me. I cannot recall any of them my age. For some reason the majority were blind in one eye. Their skin was white as snow. They did not wear shoes, only a self made shoe they called lapcie. They were made from young twig skin neatly into twine, and for soles they used animal skin. Actually, they lasted quite long. That was the only part of the U.S.S.R. where I saw this kind of footwear. Those people were very frightened and hard to get acquainted with. Eventually I was able to talk with them after I had learned some of their language. As time went by we were able to trade with them.

Winters here were very severe. The Siberian cold started in October and lasted until May. There was a short time to grow produce but they had good and rich soil and farmers were able to grow potatoes and vegetables. The natives were hunting for bears and wolves. There were a lot of them here. Things were moving not as fast as I had wished and we looked forward to the day when we would be able to leave this place and be reunited with our families back home, not knowing then about the tragic circumstances that our families were in.

In the meantime the war was going badly for the Russians. The German army was approaching Moscow. They had already occupied the entire Ukraine, White Russia, Leningrad, and they were approaching the Volga River. Stalingrad was where the Soviet Army made their stand. Millions of people had been lost to this point, both soldiers and civilians.

It had already dawned on us that as bad off as we were being here had most likely saved our lives. So time goes by, not as fast as I would wish it to go, but the road will soon be open for us all. This day eventually came in the early part of 1942, and, for the time being, we were free people with a lot of worries about where to go. There was no one to advise you and we really did not know much of this strange new country, except that we knew that the Germans were closing in on Moscow and that there was bitter fighting on the Volga River, in Stalingrad, the Caucasus, and other places. At one point, not realizing the serious situation we were in Saratov on the Volga, and this city was only two hundred miles from Stalingrad. As time goes by so does the winter. This time luck was with the Russians. The severity of the winter had helped them. By February of 1942 the Soviet Army went on the offensive and so did the politicians, both in the United

States and Great Britain. Secret negotiations have started, and soon truck loads of clothing, food, medicine, trucks, and jeeps from the United States started to arrive. More importantly for us, an agreement was reached to free those in Soviet slave labor camps and permitting them to travel freely in the Soviet Union.

By late summer of 1941 we were free. So, we decided to leave the camp as soon as we received our travel documents. The problem was that we really had no idea where to go. We made a decision to go to the city named Engels, located on the Volga River. Engels was the capital of a German republic, with roots in Germany. It was a very prosperous city, and we had hoped that we might be able to wait out the end of the war there. We traveled by train, then by ship along the Volga River, to a large city named Saratov, and then again by train to our destination. This trip took several days. We had arrived in Engels only to find a ghost town, no people to be seen except for some officials. We floated around the city for hours trying to find out what was going on there and how come there were no people there. Finally we came upon a government office and we were told that the entire republic had been resettled to some place clear across the country. It appeared the Russians suspected them to be German sympathizers and they were taking no chances. We were told that we might spend a day or two in any house we cared to, which is what we did.

On our return from Engels, we were directed to the city of Kulbyshev. But Kulbyshev being a restricted area, we could not reside there due to it being a temporary capital for the Soviet Union. So again we were directed to a small town nearby. The name of this city as far as I remember was Krasnormejskoje. We got assigned a small cottage. I do not have the date, but I recall rainy and cold days. In Russia everyone has to work, so Sam and I were working in a clothing factory; Adolf was employed in transportation. The small houses were built from lime mixed with straw and dry manure, and the roof was covered with straw. At the time we moved into that house we were not aware of the danger involved if not properly ventilated. One night Sam and I came back from a night shift, to find the house full of gas fumes. Everyone inside was asleep and half-dazed. After this incident we found out that if not properly ventilated during the rainy season the lime and the manure create dangerous gases.

So after this experience we decided to leave town for good. This time we went to Central Asia. We traveled along the Volga River to a large city, Kulbyshev and Saratov, and from there we took the train to central Asia. After a long trip that took about ten days we arrived in the country of the Uzbek Republic, in the city of Tashkent. Uzbeks are Soviet citizens. They practice the Moslem religion. Their language, Uzbek, sounded like Arabic. The climate was in one word, hot. The temperature reached one hundred and thirty degrees. To our dismay there were so many people and no facilities for them to live. People were sleeping in the streets, in parks, just anywhere there was an empty spot. There were millions of people who had evacuated from Ukraine, White Russia, and other parts, to avoid the German army. They were directed by the Soviet government, which had forgotten or ignored, to provide them with living quarters. People were dying everywhere from hunger, thirst, and sickness.

There was a reason for our being there. The Polish Army was being formed in this area, some three hundred kilometers from the Iranian border. Rumors were that they would be fighting on the western front and that the families of the soldiers would be allowed to follow them across the border to Iran and on to Palestine. We established residence on a farm about three hundred kilometers south east of Tashkent near the city of Namangan, and about 250 miles from Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, and about 200 miles from China. That will give you an idea of how far we were from Europe and the United States. I have no recollection how we got to this farm, by the name of Kim-Kolkhoz. Kim was the name, Kolkhoz is a collective farm. We were not the only refugees in the Uzbek Republic, about seven million others had the same idea. All the refugees were Soviets running away from the advancing German armies. This was a rich farmland state, with lots of rice, tropical fruits, and all kinds of vegetables, but there were just too many people there. We stayed on the farm hoping to avoid famine and the diseases of the cities, but it was just bad all over. Somehow we survived mostly on vegetables, there was no bread or meat or anything else. We got introduced to the manager of this village. An Uzbek, he did not speak or understand Russian. He became friendly with us because we were not Russians. Uzbeks hate the Soviets because Uzbeks are very religious people and they believe in Allah as their god.

There were no apartments but the manager allowed us to live in his office. We had to improvise for furniture so we made our beds from old doors, with straw mattresses. I worked for awhile picking cotton, then I had to feed horses and camels. Work started at 4 a.m. until 12 p.m. and at 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. and longer. The reason for the early start was the heat, which was enormous. In between, Sam and I were doing some tailoring for the bosses of this village for food only, yet we did not see a slice of bread for months. One day the government was looking for workers to build a water dam and a reservoir some fifty kilometers away. Adolf and I went there by foot, there was no transportation. The pay was supposed to be bread and some money plus food on the job. It took us two days to get there and when we finally got there they had hired so many people that they had to turn us away. For our trouble each of us got eight pitas, they called them lepioshka, each weighing about a quarter of a pound. Back we went. The Uzbeks were excellent horsemen and when a man was drafted to the army he was provided with a horse from the farm and they both went to war. We had to get out of this place as soon as possible. Geographically we were living near the city of Namangan, about two hundred fifty miles from Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan and about two hundred miles from China. That will give you an idea of how far we were from Europe and the United States.

Finally after about two or three months we were able to register with General Sikorski's Polish Army, all Polish citizens from former slave labor camps and former soldiers from prisoner of war camps from 1939. All together there were about two million, including about one hundred fifty thousand Polish Jews. Registration was near the city of Samarkand, some three hundred kilometers from where we were staying. Sam, Adolf, and I registered and we waited several examinations. They even cut our hair, only to be informed that they had reached their limit. We were promised to be informed when the second unit would be assembled. Disappointed, we had no recourse but to return

home. This unit left for Iran and Palestine, then England, and eventually fought and took Monte Casino. There they sustained enormous losses, but for the first time Polish soldiers achieved victory. By the way, former Prime Minister of Israel Menachem Begin was able to go as a soldier with the Polish Army, and eventually stay in Israel. He was in a labor camp not far from where I had been.

Conditions on the farm did not improve, so we tried to return to the area we had left. Uncle David and his family had stayed behind and we asked him to supply us with special papers we needed to make that trip back. You see, you cannot go anywhere in the Soviet Union unless you have a travel permit. You simply cannot go to a railroad station and buy a ticket. You need a request from your future employer and a letter from the manager stating that you were very important to them. You also need clearance from the K.G.B., or as they were known then, the N.K.V.D. After all this you waited and hoped that all of this would work for you. Eventually we succeeded and after six months we were able to return. The return trip was a nightmare in itself. Traveling in the Soviet Union was less than luxurious in the best of times. These were not the best of times. Horse and wagon, railroad trip where there were no seats to be had. You had to provide your own food, there were no sleeping facilities. When the train stopped at a station the conductor would announce how long they will stay for refueling or a change of crew. So we had time to exchange some things for food. The only things we had were matches and salt. There was one stretch that took us two-and-a-half days to pass through a desert where there was absolutely nothing. The name of that desert is Kuzi-Kum in the Kazakh Republic. Now the Soviets largest missile base is there. They send the cosmonauts into space from there. Finally after some two weeks we reached our destination. There was no food shortage there, and bread never tasted better. We had jobs waiting for us, a place to live, and we tried to settle in as best as we could.

The war was fought bitterly, but this time in favor of the Russians. By the end of 1942 a Polish consulate opened up in Kuibyshev and we were issued Polish passports. In November 1942 I was notified that a Polish volunteer army was being formed to take part in the effort to free Eastern Europe from the German occupation. We knew the situation in Poland was bad. We had heard about the formation of ghettos and labor camps but we still had no idea how bad it really was. I was young, single, and not glad to leave everyone behind, especially your mother-to-be, but I had to volunteer because I felt that this was the only way we had of ever getting back home. I was always hoping that my family would be alive.

I sent in my application and in the beginning of February of 1943 I was in the army. To set the record straight this did not turn out to be a true volunteer army because in the end they took every able-bodied man and woman. The name of my unit was the First Polish Division, named Tadeusz Kosciuszko, with the first infantry regiment. We were assembling about one hundred thirty kilometers from Moscow, near a village called Divovo. The nearest large cities were Ryazan and Kaluga. Nearby was a large river, Oka. The front line was one hundred sixty kilometers away. I was assigned to the first infantry regiment, first battalion, with the first mortar company. Our weapon was an eighty-two millimeter rocket launcher. It worked this way. We had telephone lines to the front line

position. The officer in charge sent the particulars about the enemy position and distance, I set the target and gave the order to fire. This was a very interesting three part launcher. If set correctly it was quite devastating, yet it had a reach of only five hundred meters. It arched like a rainbow. The bad part was that the enemy was always out to destroy us, since we did a great deal of damage to their front lines.

After about two months of training I was given one stripe, which meant Private First Class, and was chosen to join Non-Commissioned Military Academy. This was a very select group of soldiers, very strict and disciplined, and demanding. You were expected to have leadership qualities, and I am not sure I had that, but I was chosen and I did not object. Then again, as you know, you do not object in the army. There were about two hundred forty of us from the whole division of eighteen thousand men. All the officers were commissioned and professional soldiers. Because the front line was only one hundred sixty kilometers away most of the training was conducted at night. After about three months of training the order came to move on to the front lines, and the whole First Division went to the front. It took us about six days to get there and we immediately dug in. We started out on the railroad about one hundred kilometers, then about sixty on foot, jeep, and horseback. We moved strictly at night because the German air force was bombing and strafing all the time. You do not realize how dangerous the mission is until you get there. It was frightening. We dug in immediately and deep, while the scout units were observing the territory and the commanding officer was marking plans. After about a day or two we were ordered to cover the infantry, while they tried heroically to advance. We succeeded in pushing back the enemy five kilometers, with very heavy losses. The firing lasted a day and a half, and then we were ordered to withdraw. I came out in one piece, but I lost a couple of close army buddies. The area we were in was heavy marshland, and not adaptable for heavy armor and tanks so we had no tank support yet we succeeded in breaking through the enemy lines and moving forward. This part of the front was eventually broken through eight months later. Our losses were very high, two thirds in all units throughout the division. But I was lucky. All this fighting took place near the town of Lenino, near the city of Smolensk.

We withdrew twenty kilometers into a thick forest to regroup and wait for reinforcements. I do not recall the nearest town from the forest where we were stationed, but in any case we were about fifteen kilometers from the Katin Forest. This was the area where the Germans blamed the Soviets for murdering over three thousand soldiers and officers taken prisoner during the Soviet invasion of Poland in September 1939. After this area was reoccupied by the Soviets in 1943 an international commission was sent there to investigate those murders. While those proceedings were going on a delegation from our unit was sent there, and I was with them. The delegation included eight people in all, one of who was our lieutenant. The Soviets had opened the graves for the investigation. Our lieutenant was a cadet in a military academy in 1939, then detained by the Soviets after his capture in 1939. He was devastated to find among the dead soldiers his commander from the academy, from a list posted there. Of course, at that time we were sure that the Germans were capable of doing that, after all they did murder millions of people in the Soviet Union. We did not think that the Russians would have time to kill all of those officers while being chased by the Germany Army. Besides, they had over

two million Poles, including some one hundred fifty thousand Jews, in their slave labor camps, including many ex army men, and they did not kill them. A lot had died from malnutrition, illness, hunger, and other things, but we were not shot at.

However, in November of 1944 in the city of Praga-Warszawska, which is located on the right bank of the Wisla River just across from Warsaw, I met a Polish family while I was looking for a sewing machine to use to make new uniforms for myself and my commander. I was able to do that whenever there was a pause in the action. This lady was a widow, very kind and decent. I was invited into her home and I was free to do as much as I wanted. After a few hours she told me about the suffering she and her family were subjected to, and that she had lost her husband during the occupation. I asked her about the Jewish population in the Warsaw Ghetto and in the area. She indicated to me that while her husband was alive they were able to help in some way the Jewish family they had known. She mentioned their name but I have forgotten it. But after her husband's death the situation worsened and the Jewish family of three left in order not to jeopardize her. She also disclosed to me that one of her sons was in the Polish Army during the 1939 who held the rank of lieutenant. At first she did not know whether he was alive or dead. Then she received a letter from the German government informing her that he was shot by the Russians. In 1943 she again received a letter, but this time from her son stating that he was alive in Germany. I always tried to go back to my situation. She knew that I was Jewish because I told her so, and that I had left my family in the city of Bochnia. I also told her that I had written a letter home and to the mayor of the city. She started to cry and shake her head. I did not want to harm her with my questions. She told me in her own words, I still remember, go on my child. At this point I was the big soldier with the two guns on me and in charge of an artillery gun, but I started to cry. I regained my composure. They were a nice family, very warm and decent. Anyway, I was able to finish the uniforms for my captain and myself. Christmas came and my captain and I were invited to her home with ten other soldiers of my choice for the Christmas Eve dinner. That was my first sit down dinner since the summer of 1939. After my return from the war in 1945 I got in touch with that family to let them know that I was all right. Her daughter told me that the widow had passed away but that she was able to see her son, who did come back from the camp.

We got additional men in November 1943. Winter was in full swing by then. A lot of heavy snow had fallen, accompanied by very strong winds that created deep drifts. For many days and nights the army lined up, one to another, with wooden shovels, and shoveled that snow without moving out of your designated spot. And, as fast as you pushed the snow, that fast you got new one come down, with low temperature, but we were already used to that and nobody paid any attention. A little later we were struck with dysentery. Almost everybody got it, including me. Many died from this illness but I was lucky and fully recovered after three weeks in the field hospital. At first we suspected the Germans of poisoning the water, but we soon found out that they had the same problem. This territory, with the largest marshlands in Europe, had problems with its drinking water. After recovery from the illness I was discharged from the hospital. It was then that I decided to change my unit, even though I had only three weeks until I graduated from the academy. There were openings in the artillery due to losses sustained

at our maiden encounter at Lenino and I took a chance and asked for a transfer. It was not easy, but I was able to persuade a young secretary to try for my transfer. She then told me my case will be difficult due to being in a special unit, but I was able to stand a chance due to my ability and leadership shown in my last assignment.

In a few days I was notified that my transfer had been approved. It made a big difference to me, a change from a small mortar to a big three ton howitzer cannon with a range of eight kilometers. But, we were never farther from the front positions than two kilometers. The name of this unit was the First Field Artillery Regiment, with the First Division, Battery Number Two. It consisted of four 122 millimeter cannon with sixty-four men manning them, plus eight drivers, one special scout unit of eight men, sixteen telephone and radio linemen, our own quartermaster, and our own field kitchen. I was assigned to be the gunner, which was a very responsible position, because of my previous training. Most of the men were veterans from the 1939 war. I was very happy with this unit. Being in a small unit you have the advantage of knowing everyone. Each of us would watch out for the others, just like a close family. We had a very good commanding officer, and this time I did not have to walk and carry a launcher weighing twenty kilograms. We were driving American big Studebakers. It was now January 1944 and we were on the move again. Although we were under Polish command our General Staff was taking orders from the First White Russian Commander General Rokosowsky. General Rokosowsky decided to shift our division to a different flank and we succeeded in pushing the enemy back.

At the beginning of 1944 we were somewhere in White Russia. As I recall, winter that year was very brutal, with an enormous snowfall, bitter cold, and wind. We had to keep our roads open and maintain them twenty-four hours with shifts from each outfit, and clear the snow manually with deep wooden shovels. At the same time we had to keep our enemy on guard with a steady artillery bombardment. As I remember, at the end of March 1944 our offensive had begun with slow moving progress, with heavy losses to both manpower and equipment. Along the way we discovered the enormous atrocities committed against the civilian population in that area of White Russia. I did not know if they were singled out by association or race, none of the mass graves had crosses or Stars of David. As a front line soldier your objective is to get to your assigned destination, with one thing in mind, trust ahead and stay alive, concentrate and remember what you have seen.

By April of 1944, after three months of agony and sadness, we reached the pre-1939 Polish border, the old Polish border. In 1939, twenty-seven days after Poland lost its war with Germany, Germany and Russia once more divided Poland. The Soviet Union took the western part of the Ukraine and the western part of White Russia. These territories changed hands each time war erupts, and by the time the WWII ended, the Soviet Union had no intention of giving this territory to Poland. Instead, she divided Germany, and gave Upper Silesia, Lower, East, and West Prussia all the way to the Baltic Sea from Gdansk-Kolberg-Szczecin to Poland, naming it the Oder-Neisse line. In actuality this area is much larger and richer in raw materials and farmland.

Our losses were tremendous, but our unit was intact. This time our main thrust was to reach the capital of Poland, the city of Warsaw. In June we crossed the river Bug. This was indeed a great obstacle, but it would enable us to push in a direct line into the historic city off Lublin. The Germans had hoped to hold their positions on the opposite side of the river, so we had no choice but to pursue the enemy. After liberating a huge amount of territory from the enemy our objective was to occupy Lublin, the capital city of this region, and a city known to Jews throughout the world as a cradle of Jewish learning. We occupied this city on July 23, 1944. I had not seen such destruction of human lives and horses, passing through a front line like this. From that day on we continued liberating towns, cities, and villages, and the people in them, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. We knew then of two existing large concentration camps nearby. The first one was Sobibor. We did not find any survivors there. The second concentration camp was Majdanek, the second largest to Auschwitz. We had hoped to be able to free those poor souls there. Although we knew things were bad there no one could have imagined the horror that was taking place there. We had come across mass graves in the Soviet Union, but we had not seen any concentration camps. We had occupied the camps by the middle of July. There was not a living soul left alive. It would serve no purpose to describe what I saw there. All of it is now a public record. But one thing still stands in front of me. Hundreds of thousands of shoes sorted out according to sizes, men, ladies, and children. I can still see them in front of my eyes.

We were moving slowly, fighting was very heavy and the Germans were deploying big rockets. They used the V-1 and V-2 rockets there. They were using them over London. Some of them landed near our positions but failed to explode. At first we did not know what to make out of these monsters, but we soon got to know them. Progress came very slowly, this was a very populated area with small cities and towns. Losses on both sides were tremendous, and the warm weather did not help either. We had reached the outskirts of Warsaw in August of 1944. It was a large city named Praga-Warszawska, located on the right-bank of the largest river in Poland, the river Wisla. When you cross the river you are in the capital city, Warsaw. This river created a buffer zone, and now everyone was healing his wounds. We were ordered to pull back for a well-deserved rest, the first one since October of 1943. The front was quiet. My protective cannon shield was heavily damaged, but the vital instruments and my head were all right. Our commander was severely wounded, we had lost two communication men, but the rest of our battery was O.K. By August 29 we joined the rest of the regiment. There were so many dead soldiers that each unit had to help to dispose of the bodies, a very painful task indeed, but necessary to avoid all kinds of epidemics in the August heat. The enemy was trying to attack at various points across the river. At one point they even launched a counter offensive but it failed.

We were on a flat area, dug in deep. On orders from the Soviet headquarters a special unit was using observation balloons and the Germans were shooting them down. So the regiment commander decided to send a group of volunteers under the command of our captain to observe the frontal positions and find a weak spot which would allow us to cross the river, collect all possible information, get an enemy soldier, and bring him along with us. Sounds like a fairy tale, but it had been accomplished many times before, but

not across a large river. All together we were eight or nine men selected by our captain. We had been promised all kinds of medals, but none of us were given a guarantee of returning alive. I was one of the chosen ones. I had no idea what the captain saw in me; I assumed it was because I had knowledge of the German language. I had no choice but to agree; secondly, I would never have refused the order of my captain because I had the highest respect for him. After all, he was going along with us. We had observed for five days and on the sixth day we were supposed to cross. While at the river's bank at our observation point our captain received a message to return to our positions immediately. As it turned out the infantry regiment, which our battery was supporting was under heavy attack on our right flank near the town of Calvary. Calvary is a small, hilly town opposite the city of Warsaw. Warsaw is to the left and Modlin is to the right. Calvary is known throughout the European Catholic community as a holy shrine. Each year in May or June there is a pilgrimage to this town. In a way we were lucky that the Germans decided to attack this Modlin front because the mission that was canceled was very dangerous. When you are chosen for a mission of this magnitude you cannot allow yourself to think in a negative way or to think about the danger involved. But deep down we knew how risky this mission was and how slim our chances were of returning. Thank God it was canceled, and I did not have to cross the river at that time, and I can reminisce about it now. As it turned out the infantry regiment sustained heavy losses but we were able to beat the German attack back. After four days this front stabilized itself and we returned to our old defensive lines. Our battery came out on top without sustaining casualties. Those attacks continued until January 17, 1945.

I had not explained to you how the support system worked between the artillery and the infantry. There are four infantry regiments in a division and there is one artillery regiment, split into four batteries, each one supporting one infantry regiment. So the coordination is of the utmost importance. We immediately returned to our positions under heavy cover. Our captain lost his hat and we could not retrieve it.

In late September or early October 1944 the rumor spread that our Army Commander General Berling had received an urgent appeal from the Polish partisans in Warsaw, requesting regimental assistance on the other side of the river Wisla. Supposedly he was assured of safe passage across the river by the partisans, so he sent over the Third Regiment from the Third Division. It was a disaster. Many soldiers died and casualties were high. I personally lost two friends and one fellow my age lost his leg. We had been together in the labor camp. After this incident the general was relieved of his command and we never heard from him again. Later, we were told by the politicians that General Berling did not first consult his superior commander, General Rokosowski, who was in charge of the First White Russian front. We were all very sad and felt sorry for him. He was our first commander. I met him many times, he was right with you on the line, and all of us looked up to him like a father. I know that he did not do this as a reckless thing, because he admired his troops. At the same time the regimental commander General Galicki was also relieved of his command. The reason given for his dismissal was that he did so against better judgment.

While the liberation of Poland continued we received only a lukewarm reception from the local population. After being stationed on the west bank of the Wisla through Christmas and past New Years until the sixteenth of January, 1945 I had the privilege of meeting some local people and trying to find out why our men were receiving this cold treatment. I also came across one Jewish family of three who survived the Warsaw Ghetto and were living in the area. They blamed the outcome of the Ghetto Uprising mostly on the people outside the walls and to a great degree on the most active and well organized fighting resistance group in Poland, the Home Army or Armja Krajowa (AK).

Unfortunately, Jews were not admitted to their ranks except in a few instances of not being recognized as Jews, and the population were fed false accusations the the First Polish Army was full of communists in Polish uniforms, which naturally, to my knowledge, was the biggest lie of all. If the same group of leaders would have given a helping hand to the Jewish resistance in the ghetto and elsewhere, Hitler would never have succeeded with the Final Solution. The sad story is that many of the Jewish resistance fighters accosted in the forest by the members of the AK lost their lives on the spot. It is very hard to understand this especially when the Germans hunted both groups. Those stories were told to me by the surviving family and by an honest Christian in the latter part of 1944.

It is very painful to write about that because as a child and later as a teen I had no problems growing up in Poland, nor did I have any problem in the military. I cannot accuse every Pole of doing wrong at that time because there were many of them who assisted Jewish families and ghetto fighters. If the conditions and help from the AK had been different the outcome of the general uprising of August 2, 1944 would have been different, in my opinion. The uprising would have succeeded and the relations between those great religions would have had a new beginning and understanding. The AK accused the Polish Army fighting on the eastern front of being communist, while the Polish soldiers who served on the western front were the good guys and the *ÓrealÓ* Poles, not saying or mentioning that both groups were interned in Siberian labor camps not by their own choice. In many cases due to the sudden exit, families were split and never reunited again, and this is the sad part.

When the Polish Army started to organize in the U.S.S.R. in 1941-42, all of us were released after the Soviet Union, the United States, and Great Britain entered into an agreement after the war broke out on June 22, 1941. There were about two million Poles in the labor camps, including a small percentage of P.O.W.s and Jews. In the late summer of 1941 it was decided by the Polish exiles in London to form a Polish military force in the U.S.S.R. and fight the Nazis on both fronts, starting with the eastern front. The war situation looked very grim for the Russians in 1941. The agreement was signed by General Wladislaw Sikorski and Josef Stalin, with the agreement of Churchill and Roosevelt.

In Russia General Wladislaw Anders was put in charge of the division forming near the city of Saratov on the Volga River, some two hundred miles from Stalingrad. General Anders was one of the high officers who survived the Katyn massacre of

thousands of Polish P.O.W. officers by the Russians near Smolensk in 1940. Polish people descended from all over to enlist and join the army, but first we had to get some food to get on our feet. None of us was ready for military training and this process was very slow. The timetable was set but General Anders could not deliver his troops on time and he arrived at the conclusion that one division would not do the job right. There were just too many Poles in the camp to be processed. By the time I reached this area the army had moved to Central Asia, near Tashkent. By the spring of 1942 over seventy thousand soldiers and family members had left the Soviet Union for Iran. By the summer over forty thousand more had left. None were assigned to the eastern front. There were many families split by that development who were never reunited again. It was estimated that about one hundred ten or one hundred forty thousand people departed and that about 1,860,000 were left behind at the mercy of the Soviets. Among those who did not want to leave was Colonel Zigmunt Berling. He was on General Anders staff, a professional officer who spent time with Anders at the P.O.W. camp and was released in 1940, in time to be saved from the Katyn Forest tragedy.

Our unit was already on the move back to the fighting again. After a few days we were able to join the rest of the regiment without sustaining any casualties. This situation persisted until the 17th of January 1945. I remember this day very well. We had launched an overnight offensive on all fronts facing the river and by mid-morning we were across the river Wisla and in the capital city of Warsaw. The city was in ruins. We had passed the remains of the Warsaw Ghetto, a sad scene indeed. Seeing what I have seen to this point my hopes for my family were depleting. But we had to move forward as fast as we could to save as many people as possible. From here on the situation got a little better. There were no rivers to cross, at least until we reached the German border. We were advancing in a northwest direction through Poland into German Pomeria to the Baltic Sea. In Poland we passed through the cities of Plock, Wlocawek, Torun, Bydgoszcz, Chelmno. Chelmno is a small city about twenty-five kilometers from Bydgoszcz. We had no knowledge then of what had gone on there. There were no large buildings, no railroad tracks leading to anything. Then, the population told us that there was a death camp there and that over 350,000 Jews had been put to death by gas. Of course, we could not stay there. Our aim was to block the German escape through the Baltic Sea and to trap this S.S. army in the forests of Pomeria. At first fighting was light, and in some instances very light.

As we crossed into Germany this changed and they fought with everything they had. All the cities and towns were empty, they were evacuated. The stores were full of things but no people. On this part of the front there were small and medium-sized cities and a lot of farmland and villages, and forests stretching in some parts all the way to the sea. Cities of particular importance were Zlotow, Jastrow, Rederitz, Markish-Friedland, Stargard, Tempelburg, Falkenburg, Bramburg, Kolberg, Paulus-Dorff, and many more. We had orders to capture the enemy city of Zlotow, and that is what we did. Fighting was very heavy and casualties were high on both sides. One day I witnessed a tank battle near the city of Markish-Friedland where we lost thirty tanks and the Germans lost twenty-five of theirs. The enemy was deploying a fairly new weapon, the Panzerfaus, weighing about five pounds but very effective. To confirm our losses I have a very interesting story to

tell. I am not sure I have ever told this to anyone, not even your mother. She did not want to dwell on the past and I did not want to volunteer anymore. Fighting in the forest was very difficult. Visibility was very poor, and it was very difficult to maneuver the big cannons. At one point the Germans actually surrounded us and for almost a week we were cutoff with no supplies coming in. Another unit came to our rescue and after heavy fighting the enemy surrendered. That heavy fighting was going on until March, 1945. Finally our ordeal came to an end and we marched on. The German army we were fighting was none other than the Himmler Division, an elite group that did not give up without a fight, however difficult it might be. But we broke through and by the first of April we were in the port city of Stettin on the Baltic Sea. The northwestern front was completely defeated.

Before I go any further here is the story I promised you. The name of the village is Paulus-Dorff. We had occupied a farm just outside Stettin. We had been commanded to dig in at this farm, large and impressive, but abandoned. Some soldiers were ordered to inspect the area and report back of safe conditions. A day or two later another soldier and I went to a barn to look for some eggs when I notice a moving motion in a pile of straw in one of the corners. I shouted in Polish, Who is there? The response was also in Polish. The voice sounded unfamiliar. I then ordered him to come out with his hands up, in German, while the other soldier called for reinforcements. Out came ten S.S. soldiers and one captain. Well, they had enough ammunition to wipe us out. As it turned out the same captain commanded the tank battle and he very accurately described out losses that day, and how lucky we had been that day because they would have tried to break out that night. So I received a pat on the back and a fat medal, and the original guys who searched this place red faces.

April 1945. One of many recollections I have is of the city of Oranienburg, about fifty kilometers from Berlin. It is located between Tempelhof airport, Potsdam, and the Reichstag and Brandenburg Gate. In that city there was a large concentration camp, fully equipped, plus tremendous factories for making clothes for the army and to manufacture airplane parts. As far as I can remember there was little destruction to this city. The name of the camp was Sachsenhausen, a notorious one indeed. As far as I can remember we found about two thousand inmates there. The majority of them were women of eastern European origin, from Hungary, and in very poor condition. We also came upon some S.S. guards and they went quickly down the drain. When we interviewed Germans living nearby they insisted they knew nothing about what was going on there. We also came upon a bunker about twenty kilometers from Oranienburg. We were told by the Germans that Hitler and his staff were there about three hours before. I also saw there hundreds of large, pure white rabbits, the size of a small dog, with large blue-green eyes. We helped the inmates with whatever we could and then the administrative unit took over and we had to continue on to our destination, which was Berlin.

The closer we got, the stronger the resistance, but we had the upper hand. The destruction was not spared and the city lay in ruins. Losses on both sides were very high. We knew that this would be the end of the war, but there was no time to think about that.

Now that this part of the front was completed we turned our attention to the big push towards the city of Berlin, where the whole tragic war started. Our biggest obstacle to overcome was to cross the largest river in Germany, the river Oder, in order to complete a circle around Berlin. On the 15th of April 1945 more power than the German army had faced before amassed on the opposite side of the river. The existing bridges were unsafe or destroyed and our engineers had to lay phantom bridges under cover of smoke screen. The enemy had strong fortifications and beautiful bunkers, but the firing never let up and in the end it was just too much for them and they left the bunkers and ran with the entire front in pursuit of them. We got held back for awhile at the Zello Heights but that was overcome and by the 18th of April we were in Berlin. Thank God we sustained no casualties to our unit in this drive. To be in Berlin was a miracle itself, especially for me. By then I knew already that my family perished in the Holocaust. Fighting was intense and very difficult. Berlin was full of civilians and we had strict orders not to harm them, as a matter of fact this order was given to every soldier before we crossed the German border. To disobey would invite severe punishment.

The resistance grew the closer we were getting to the city. The destruction was not spared and the whole city lay in ruins. Losses on both sides were tremendous. We knew this would be the end of the war, yet there was no time to think about it. You just try to outmaneuver your enemy and win every scrap of land from him and hope for the best. My responsibility at this point was to get a good location for our cannon and protection for the crew. In close range fighting there is no time for command orders, you just try to get a good view of the enemy and be as fast as you can to fire your gun and outmaneuver him, and hope for the best. Fighting was now simply street to street and door to door. The most difficult in street fighting is a tank or cannon, because you cannot maneuver it and it is very difficult to hide them. Now we were getting close to the Reichstag and the Brandenburg Gate, the Reich Chancellery, the official headquarters for the Nazi government. So it was extremely hard to look at your fallen comrades in arms when you had your victory in front of your eyes. In a war there are many things you cannot forget. One of them was Alexander-Platz, a beautiful park with lovely gardens, and there was that vicious fighting going on all around it. I was lucky enough to get a spot in the park, where we had some protection from bushes. My cannon was occupying a spot that had brought bad luck to its previous occupants. Four cannon from different units had been destroyed there and one tank, so I cannot say that I was smart, I think it was God's will that we survived. We held this position for about two days and it was all over. So we did our best for almost two weeks of close range fighting in Berlin.

My crew and I came out of it on top and finally it was over at 2 a.m. May 2, 1945. Berlin had succumbed. The devastation was tremendous in human lives and property, but thank God we stayed alive and well. And now finally, after almost two and a half years of sleepless nights we got a good night of sleep two days after it was all over. The only casualty was my uniform. It caught two shrapnel fragments that did not penetrate because I had special padding on the upper part just for that. One of my soldiers was hit in the arm but did not need hospitalization. The cannon next to ours was not as lucky. They received a direct hit and the whole crew lost their lives. Just think of it, the last two hours of the war. Finally, it was over. It is hard to describe our feelings. Silent prayers

were said. Nobody was ashamed to show tears in their eyes. It was really over and Hitler and Germany was defeated. The outcome was devastating in human lives. Property you do not count, for that is replaceable, but millions of human beings were gone forever. I was happy, very happy, but at the same time very sad because I had lost my whole family, my relatives, my schoolmates, and my home. Thank God, I still had your mother to be and my relatives who survived the Soviet labor camps, but I had no knowledge of when I would be able to see them all. But the most important thing was that the war was over. Our final position for the last day of the war was at the Alexander-Platz, near the central post office. The shooting stopped at 2 a.m. on May 2, 1945.

And now it is time to go home, but there is nobody there. This memory is still with me to this day. I have spent many sleepless nights after the war over that. But life had to go on. By the 9th of May 1945 the whole First Division was returning to Poland to a city named Siedlce, located about seventy kilometers from Warsaw. The reason for that was that the capital, Warsaw, was destroyed. We were told that eventually our division would be stationed in Warsaw. The record shows two hundred fifty six survivors out of the whole original division coming out from this dreadful war without a scratch. By a special decree the record of the First Division was entered into the annals of the Polish history books. Now the division was permanently stationed in the capital city, Warsaw.

As soon as we crossed the Polish borders in April 1944 I sent a letter to the mayor of my hometown asking for any information on the whereabouts of members of my family, listing everybody by name. The answer I got in March 1945 was a long letter informing me that he regrets very much, but to the best of his knowledge there were no survivors. Still believing in miracles I had asked my commanding officer while still in Germany for a leave of absence when the war was over. He kept his promise and in the beginning of June I returned home. I came across a couple of my schoolmates and they were shocked to see me alive and in uniform. I was invited to their homes to reminisce about the good old years. But as far as my family, they could only repeat what I already knew. Our home was demolished. Our neighbors, when they saw me, thought that I was a living ghost. They embraced me full of tears. I called the mayor of the city to thank him and let him know I had survived this war. He invited me to stay with his family. I accepted his invitation and spent two days at his home. Then it was time to go back. We embraced and I left, crying in silence. I never returned to my hometown. My family was taken to Auschwitz, only about seventy kilometers away. One should remember that before the war Oswiecim, or Auschwitz as the Germans named it, was mainly known for the fact that it was the biggest beer producer in Poland.

So, life goes on. We can never forget them. I did all I could to help defeat the German army and save as many people as I could, but of course it was not enough. This was my only reason for volunteering for such hazardous duty, and not for any glory. I had been given at one point the chance to be stationed behind the lines and I objected vigorously. A deputy regiment commander threatened me with court martial if I did not assume the duties assigned to me. My answer was that I did not volunteer to be behind the lines. He had no answer to that and let it go. Maybe it sounds corny or stupid but I

sincerely felt that I had been given a chance, which was more than my brothers had gotten or than millions of others had gotten. Given the same circumstances I would surely do it again. It was my nature and it still is today not to harm even a fly, but I had to do what I did to protect the honor of my people and the country I was fighting for. I know that my parents would have been proud of me knowing that I had given all to save them from the ordeal they were in. And despite the evil that the Germans did I will forgive them. Retribution will be theirs, if not in this world then surely in the next one. I am proud of what I did during this terrible war and I do not wish anyone to go through the same things that I went through, but I thank God for taking good care of me and the rest of my crew. I have received fourteen distinguished medals and special commendations.

All that was left was to get my discharge from the army in September of 1945. I got married to your lovely mother on November 18, 1945, left Poland in the spring of 1946 for Munich, Germany, to emigrate to the United States, which we did in April 1947, and the rest is history...

### Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust

By Bernhard Storch

On December 7, 1941 the first mass killing of Jews by gas took place at the small village of Chelmno. Jews were brought from the surrounding areas, held over night in a church, then loaded on special buses. While in transit for a short distance gas was released and by the time they reached the nearby forest all were dead. They were then burned in open ditches. And so began the beginning of the Jewish destruction in Europe. Over three hundred fifty thousand Jews died at this site. On March 13, 1942 the second such camp was ready at the small town of Belz in western Galicia. This small shtetl was known before the war for its very famous grand rabbi of Belz and for the old song My Shtetl Belz. This city was occupied by Hasidic Jews the last time I was there around September 7, 1939, while I was escaping from the German army. The first six thousand Jews killed there came from the city of Mielec, which I also passed in 1939. At the end, more than four hundred sixty thousand Jews lost their lives there, plus fifteen hundred Poles were deported and gassed there because they had helped some of their Jewish neighbors. Shortly afterwards other camps such as Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sobibor, and Maidanek were put into operation and the Jewish people of Europe were demolished.

The Nazis had singled out the Jews of Lithuania. Hitler planned to kill all the Jews in Europe, and the Jews of Lithuania were chosen first in line. So, on January 1, 1942 in the ghetto of Vilno one hundred fifty young Jews gathered not to mourn the sixty thousand already murdered, but on behalf of the twenty thousand still alive behind barbed wire and they declared that they would not be led like lambs to the slaughter. And so the resistance was born in the Vilno ghetto and elsewhere. Eventually this event led to a break out from the ghetto and to join the partisans in the nearby forest.

In the Warsaw Ghetto on July 28, 1942 a Jewish fighting organization was secretly set up by the men and women of the ghetto, determined to resist, if possible, the

daily deportations to the Treblinka death camp. On January 18, 1943 a German unit entered the ghetto to start again the deportations. Six hundred Jews were killed in the streets and six hundred were deported to Treblinka. A group of Jews managed to acquire arms and fired back, and several German soldiers fell. On the 21st of January a grenade was thrown at the building in which the Jews sought to resist and so the resistance continued. The Germans left with a total of twelve soldiers killed. With courage twelve hundred Jewish soldiers battled in the streets, apartments, cellars, and sewers of the Warsaw Ghetto. The Jews possessed only seventeen rifles. The Germans brought in twenty one hundred troops with machine guns, howitzers, and rifles. According to reports three hundred soldiers were killed, many by hand-made grenades, before the revolt was crushed three weeks later.

April 7, 1943 was not lucky for the Jews of the historic city of Zamosc. The first twenty-five hundred Jews were sent by train to the third Nazi death camp, outside the village of Sobibor. On the last day of April 1943 the Germans deported two thousand Polish Jews from the nearby city of Wlodowa to Sobibor. Our army liberated both these towns in July of 1944. On reaching the camp the Jews from Wlodowa attacked the S.S. guards with pieces of wood torn from the carriages. The whole transport of Jews was shot or blown away with grenades. Like the revolt of the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto and hundreds of other ghettos throughout Eastern Europe, this one was a desperate and hopeless act of resistance. The machinery of tyranny and mass murder was too overwhelming to overcome. The death camp of Treblinka, located between Warsaw and Lublin in central Poland saw a revolt by those who were forced to dig up corpses to burn them to hide the evidence of the genocide committed by the German S.S. and their collaborators. Of the seven hundred Jewish slave laborers in the camp more than five hundred were shot during the revolt by the S.S. and Ukrainian guards, but over one hundred fifty managed to escape. The guards subsequently hunted down some.

Those who lived under terror had no alternative but to submit to it if they were to avoid reprisals and the murder of hostages. Yet for the slave labor gang now being used to dig up dead bodies and burn them death was also to be their end. So they decided to revolt at the former Sobibor death camp on October 13, 1943. They attacked their armed guards with knives and hatchets, led by a Soviet prisoner of war, Alexander Perchesky, and a Polish Jew, Leon Feldhendler. They turned on their guards, killing nine S.S. men and two Ukrainian guards. By breaking the camp's wire fence three hundred people escaped. Two hundred were killed; one hundred dispersed into the forests and swamps of eastern Poland and were able to join the Russian partisan units in the forest. Our army entered Sobibor about the 22nd of July 1944. No survivors were left.

In a slave labor camp of Koldyczewo, a Jew Shlomo Kushner in German-occupied White Russia the revolt on March 20, 1944. During the revolt Nazi guards were killed and hundreds of laborers reached the forest and joined the partisans. Kushner and twenty others were caught. He committed suicide before he could be tortured. The following day in the nearby Bialystok area a Soviet partisan group led by a Jew, Sergeant Andrei Tsymbal, with a large number of Jewish fighters under his command, destroyed a German military train carrying armored cars to the eastern front.

On November 2, 1943 another death camp was in operation near the city of Lublin, known as the cradle of Jewish learning and scholars. This was the concentration camp of Maidanek. Within a week forty-five thousand survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto were killed there. After that week five thousand former Jewish soldiers of the Polish army were murdered there, disregarding the Geneva Convention. These soldiers had been prisoners of war in the Lublin area since October 1939, for almost four years. In July 1944 my unit entered this camp, but there were no survivors.

The details of the killing in German-occupied Poland western Russia reached horrifying proportions. All the western governments were aware of the tragedy going on in those countries. On January 13, 1942 representatives from all nine occupied countries met in London to sign a declaration that all of those found guilty of war crimes would be punished after the war. Among the signers were General De Gaulle of France and General Sikorski of Poland. The slaughter of innocent people continued. Not a single day passed without the perpetration of crimes against defenseless civilians. I came upon mass graves in practically every village we entered in the Smolensk area and in White Russia in the winter of 1943 and the spring of 1944. In occupied Russia the killing of Jews continued without protest or respite. A thousand Jews were killed in Bereza Kartuska on July 15, 1942, six hundred at Szarkowszczyzna on July 18. On that day nine hundred managed to escape to nearby forests. On July 20 the Germans launched another anti-partisan operation in White Russia in the Chechowicki forest. That same day in the village of Kletsk several hundred Jews who were about to be murdered set their ghetto on fire and ran for the forest. Most of them were killed by German machine gun fire. A few reached the forest and joined the partisans, where their leader Moshe Fish was killed in a battle with the Germans six months later. On the day after the revolt at Kletsk the Jews at nearby Nieswiez also fought back against their fate. They too were almost all shot down, though one of their leaders, Shalom Cholawski, reached the forest and set up a family camp of Jews who had managed to escape the daily slaughter. They protected their camp against the German manhunts and set up a Jewish partisan unit to harass the German lines of communication.

In January 1943 the Polish ambassador to Britain, Count Rachinski, reported to the parliament that the Germans had already killed over one and a half million Jews in Poland and that something had to be done to stop the destruction of the Jewish people. At the same time a Polish courier, Mr. Karski, was dispatched from Warsaw. He came to see Mr. Roosevelt with a message from the underground and as a witness to the atrocities in his country. After the meeting he asked the president for a message to be given to the leaders in Warsaw. President Roosevelt reply was, to tell them that we will never forget them, we shall win this war and the guilty shall be punished, justice and freedom shall prevail. After Shmuel Sigelbaum, a Jewish member of the Polish parliament in exile in London, heard about the destruction and massacre of the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto he committed suicide. In his last note he wrote, I couldn't be silent while the Germans are systematically murdering my people. By my death I wish to express my strongest protest. My life belongs to the Jewish people.

On the Eastern front behind the German lines, on October 18, 1943 east of the city of Vitebsk Soviet partisans were carrying out strong disruptive activities. The same day south of Vitebsk, in fighting for the city of Melitopol a nineteen year old Red Army lieutenant named Abraham Zindels, who was Jewish, led his men into one sector of town, destroying twenty-three machine gun points until he ran out of ammunition. The Germans called on him to surrender. He replied by blowing himself up and the Germans who were near him with his last grenade. Lieutenant Zindels was awarded a medal for his death, Hero of the Soviet Union.

Who is to blame for the wrongdoing? In April 1944 a South African Air Force reconnaissance plane coming from southern Italy flew at an altitude of 26,000 feet over the I.G. Farben synthetic oil and rubber plant in southern Poland. This plant was located in the town of Monowice, only two and a half miles from Auschwitz. The pilot pictures covered an area of some six kilometers. The result, were some twenty exposed pictures, three of them of Auschwitz itself. These were the first pictures of Auschwitz. The Monowice report of April 4, 1944 was sent to the American and British air force intelligence. The interpreters found no need to comment on the row of open huts at Auschwitz, which resembled hundreds of other barracks and army camps, nor did these photographs include the gas chambers and the crematory. It was not until seven weeks later, on May 31, 1944, that Birkenau itself was photographed from the air. And the gassings and murder continue without interruption. Why there was no attempt made to bomb the railway and crematory I cannot comprehend. I lost my whole family, relatives, and friends at Auschwitz, and if you have no choice but to die I know they would have chosen to die from a friendly bomb to save more lives and disrupt the daily murder. On May 31, 1944 the South African Air Force made its first real flight over Auschwitz to photograph once more the German synthetic oil plant at Monowice. Two of the frames showed, for the first time, not only the main camp at Auschwitz but also the gas chambers, crematory, and extensive barracks at Birkenau, where thousands of Jews were being held and more than a million and a half had already been killed. But the barracks and installations at Birkenau were not examined by the photographic reconnaissance unit in Britain, whose only task was to identify as much as possible the oil production process at Monowice and the hell with the humanity.

I was at that time still on Russian territory in White Russia, fighting bitterly with the first Polish division under the command of General Berling, but this time we had the Germans on the run. In September 1944 the first division was under the command of General Berling, with General Zawadski as second in command. After the war General Zawadski became the governor of Upper Silesia.

In June 1944 Jews working as slave laborers for the German war production in the Lodz ghetto were asked to volunteer for labor outside the ghetto. The Germans told them that they were needed for clearing the debris in cities that had been bombed. The first three thousand were to go to Munich. They never reached Munich. Instead, they were all taken to Chelmno where they were gassed the same night.

On the Eastern front on June 19, 1944 more than ten thousand demolitions the Soviet partisans laid charges. They damaged beyond immediate repair the whole German rail network west of Minsk. On the next two nights forty thousand more charges blew up the railway lines between Vitebsk and Orsza and Plock. This was our front line, starting at Smolensk. This was only a prelude to the summer offensive, which started on June 22, 1944, the third anniversary of the German invasion of the Soviet Union. It took us one week to break the two hundred-mile front, with a tremendous massacre of the German troops. Tanks, cannon, and thousands of dead horses blocked the roads. With each town and village taken the murders committed by the Germans against the Jews and non-Jews alike were visible, for mass graves were visible everywhere. By July we were on Polish soil, for the first time since September 1939.

But at Auschwitz the killing continued. By June 26 over 381,000 Jews had reached Auschwitz from Hungary alone. In the last six weeks more than a quarter of a million of them were gassed. It was to alert the world that four Jews managed to escape from Auschwitz, with extraordinary luck and courage, and brought news of its gas chambers to the Jews of Slovakia. The Slovakian Jews in turn managed to get the news to neutral Switzerland. From there the terrible details were sent on June 24 to London and Washington, with a special appeal to the allies to bomb the railway lines leading to Auschwitz. One thing I cannot comprehend is that it took four people to get the news out. Didn't anyone realize that millions of people were transported to Poland and none of them came back? You do not need to be a mathematician to figure this out. Finally, on June 26, 1944 the revelation about the mass murder of Jews at Auschwitz was being studied in London and Washington. When on the following day Churchill himself read the report, he wrote to Anthony Eden, asking what could be done. Eden's answer was, What can be said? The same plea had just been put to him by two Zionist leaders, Chaim Weizmann, who later became the first President of Israel, and Moshe Shertok. This was a request for the bombing of the railway lines, the same as was requested in the telegram from Switzerland on June 24. 44, Churchill reply was sympathetic and immediate: get anything you can out of the air force, and invoke my name if you need to. The response to Churchill's request was negative. The British air ministry was skeptical about losing British airmen lives for what one official noted in the secrecy of his departmental correspondence, was no purpose. The bombing would have to be done in daylight. In Washington the American Assistant Secretary of War, John J. McCloy, rejected four separate appeals to bomb the lines. His instructions upon getting each request were, as his deputy noted, kill this. The deportations and murder continued without interruption.

On July 2, as bombs were falling on Budapest, the Americans dropped leaflets over the city informing the authorities in Hungary that the American government was closely following the persecution of the Jews with extreme gravity and warning that all those responsible for carrying out orders to persecute Jews would be punished. Within forty-eight hours of the dropping of the leaflets by the Americans the Hungarian leader Admiral Horthy informed the Germans that the deportations would have to stop. This was all as a result of publicity given to the report by the four escapees from Auschwitz. Protests had been sent to Admiral Horthy by the International Red Cross, the King of Sweden, and Pope Pius XII. The Germans, whose deportations depended on the support

of the Hungarian police and railway workers, had no choice but to stop the deportations temporarily. A total of 437,000 Hungarian Jews had already been deported, but 170,000 were saved from deportation. On July 24, despite Horthy order, fifteen hundred Jews were taken away and sent to Auschwitz that day. No punishment came to those who issued this order.

Jews had lived in Poland for over a thousand years. Before the war Jews were ten percent of the population of Poland. The leader of the powerful right wing National Democratic Party, Roman Dumowski, declared that this was eight percent too many. In 1935 Marshal Josef Pilsudski died. He was a true democrat and protector of all minorities, especially the Jews. After his death a new government took over and the reactionaries were in power. At the top was General Smigly-Rydz. The president was Professor Moscicki, and the foreign minister was Josef Beck. In 1937 the foreign minister Josef Beck stated that Poland had three and a half million Jews but that there was only room for half a million. Therefore, he said, three million Jews had to leave. After the war, as we know now, only about a quarter of a million Polish Jews survived. All in all only about twenty-five thousand survived this terrible holocaust in Poland itself; the rest were saved in Russian forced labor camps in Siberia. I was one of these, as were former Israeli Prime Ministers Menachem Begin and Itzhak Shamir and many other prominent people. They were only two hundred kilometers away from me. From 1937 on Jewish ghettos or segregation was established at Polish universities, and Jews from then on had to sit separately, not with their colleagues and countrymen. Those who disobeyed were badly harmed and abused.

Even after the liberation of some parts of eastern Poland the surviving Jews were persecuted by some of the Poles. In the village of Sokoly people who had survived the camps started to come home. Of them were seven Jews including a four year old orphan girl. All seven were murdered by someone from the village, who did not want them there, in fear that some of the survivors might reclaim their property. That was the mentality of prewar Poland, living and breathing hatred for no reason at all. You cannot say that all Polish people were like that. As the saying goes, one rotten apple spoils the barrel. When our first division had returned to Poland to the city of Siedlice, some seventy-five kilometers from Warsaw in May 1945 the same thing occurred in Lublin. Five survivors were killed, including one woman. From that day on the army was on the move to look out for those responsible for those acts of terror. Bitter fights ensued in nearby forests. I lost in this manner a very close friend with whom I had spent the war years. We had been on many dangerous missions together. He was a Pole. He received a pass to see his parents back home near the city of Bialystok. He had not seen them since 1939. He had been taken prisoner of war by Russia since 1939. He was murdered by someone in the village. A delegation from our battery attended his funeral.

From memoir of Past Department Commander NEC Bernhard Storch

## Bochnia in World War II

In the 1939 campaign the Polish army was able to put up a good stand around the city for five days, sustaining heavy losses to the enemy. The Polish army was under the command of General Spiechowitz and Tank Brigade Commander General Maczka. After bitter fighting they had to retreat west to the River Doniec, near the Rumanian border, and eventually cross over to Rumania, then France, and finally Britain. The Germans had not forgotten the casualties they sustained in Bochnia so on December 20, 1939, shortly after they occupied it, they shot fifty-five people. I don't know how many Jews were among them. The execution was conducted because a student was accused of killing a German policeman. This was the first time that the Germans established a group murder of the population for disobeying occupation rules. The majority of the Jewish population was murdered at Auschwitz, only about eighty kilometers away. The older people were shot seven kilometers away in a forest village called Baczkow, a familiar place to me. In childhood years we picked mushrooms and blueberries there.

During the occupation partisans were very active in the area and during the night of February 25-26, 1943 they demolished a railroad train, disrupting traffic for twenty hours. This sabotage was carried out by three partisans named Zbignew Kacki, Stanislaw Smajda, and Andrej Wiecha. Finally, on January 21, 1945 the city was liberated by the Russian Fourth Ukrainian Front, under the command of General Ivan Y. Petrow.

Four kilometers from the square, traveling in a northerly direction with the Proszowki road you cross the river Raba over a bridge and are in the recreational village of Proszowki, where I spent my childhood years with my parents and four brothers. In my later years we moved to the city, but our school was always in the city. That meant walking to and from school each day, plus religious instruction on Sunday. Traveling in a northwesterly direction a large forest stretched endlessly. About three kilometers from the river there is a small farm village named Baczkow. In the southern part of this village, opposite a flat land named Gorki, in the southwestern direction there is a road named Krulewska, or Kings Road in English. Going deeper into the forest, approximately eight hundred meters from the flat land in a northeasterly direction there is a spot where about fifteen hundred elderly Jews and five hundred Poles from all over Bochnia were murdered by the Germans. The victim's resting place in the forest holds five large graves. There is a memorial plate written in Hebrew and Polish, dedicated to the victims. It includes the date on which these atrocities occurred, August 22, 1942. I was able to translate this information from a book called Ziemia-Bochenska (pages 45). The name of this famous forest is Puszcza - Niepolomnicka. It was known for wild boars, buffaloes, and other wild animals. The German rulers treated the population with complete disregard for human life. After the war I was able to learn that indeed my grandparents were among the people murdered in that forest, along with thousands of other innocent people.

This city is beautifully located in a picturesque location in the state of Krakow. During the occupation this territory was neglected and roads were left to deteriorate. The city is located in a valley, surrounded to the north by heights named Solna-Gora, which

were 292 meters high. Solna-Gora was surrounded by small houses. The majority of the population was Jewish. During the occupation the Nazis created a ghetto there, and surrounded it with barbed wire. To the east are the Kolanow Heights, 262 meters high, to the south are the Uzborna Heights, 245 meters high, and to the west are the Krzeczkow Heights, 307 meters high. Through the city flows a stream called Babica, where at one time my grandparents lived. I spent many happy days with them. This stream ends up in the big river Raba. All around the city you were surrounded by fruit orchards and many narrow streets and wide stone roads. The center of the city had many landmark buildings going back for centuries. There were old churches, synagogues, schools, universities, and parks. There were three major religions practiced there, Catholic, Evangelical, and Jewish. The majority of the population was Catholic. The Jews were divided into ultra Orthodox and Orthodox (similar to our Conservative today). Our family was in this second group. Religion was taught in the schools and each religion had its own teachers. Jewish kids also attended Hebrew classes after school and on Sunday.

The last time I was in my home town was June 1945, after I returned from active duty following the end of the war. Our home was demolished, a very sad feeling indeed. The synagogue my parents belonged to was still there but it had been converted for some kind of business or storage use. It was a large, beautiful building built just before my Bar Mitzvah. I did not go inside. It was just too painful. The city itself sustained no damage after the invasion nor during the liberation by the Soviet Army in 1945. Only the Jewish homes were destroyed.

## A short history of the First Polish Division

The first Polish Division was named the Tadeusz Kosciuszko Division. One of the high officers in General Anders army was Colonel Zigmund Berling, another survivor of the Katyn Forest Massacre of 1940. Colonel Berling refused to depart with General Anders to the middle east. He declared that the shortest way back to Poland was through the eastern front.

And so, a Polish army started to form again, and all the recriminations were becoming ancient history, so to speak, but not ancient of consequence. What was of immediate interest now was the development of Russian policy and trust towards the other Poland, and the progress of the new Polish Division, which was named Tadeusz Kosciuszko.

The new division camp was in a beautiful pine forest along the Oka River, about two thirds of the way from Moscow to Razan. My regiment trained in the village of Diwovo, in the heart of Great Russia. The last time a Polish soldier had been in this part of Russia was 1612, in the days of Ivan Susanin.

The most moving ceremony took place on July 16, 1943, and it took over two hours. Since Poland was a Catholic country it started with an open air Catholic mass. An altar was erected in an open space in the forest, and a priest, Father Kupsz, officiated. The altar was decorated with three large panels. One had a symbolic picture of the Christian faith protected by a Polish soldier. The middle panel showed a Polish eagle. Below it was a crown of thorns surrounding the figures 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1943, with room left for an additional year or two. The third panel represented a scene of the Nazi horror in Poland.

The most important event of the day was the long march of the entire division, which was preceded by taking the oath. The division was presented with its banner. The banner had a white Polish eagle on a red and white background. It was inscribed in Polish: Za Ojczyzne i Honor. This means: For country and Honor. The grandstand was decorated with Polish, Russian, American, British, French, and Czechoslovakian flags,

Our commander Colonel Berling was very military but also very accessible. I had a chance to speak with him on many occasions during our military operations. He was born near Krakow in 1896, so he was just my father's age. During World War One he served in Marshal Pilsudski Polish Legion and fought successfully against the Russians; so did my father, but he served in the Austrian army and was decorated three times.

Colonel Berling also served on the General Staff of General Anders army, but disagreed with Anders on his political line. He said that the principal criteria in selecting and mobilizing people into the Kosciuszko Division was the man's own conscience. If he considered himself a Pole, he was accepted. As it turned out the division proved itself worthy of his trust. We distinguished ourselves on the battlefield, we were the first to enter Poland, and we liberated many cities, towns, and villages, including the capitals of Poland and Germany. But the price for all this was not cheap. The cost in lives was very, very high. To my knowledge only two hundred fifty-six soldiers came out without a scratch. Personally, except for losing many of my fellow soldiers and seeing many of the horrors of the war, despite all this it was worthwhile because I was able to help some people out and free them from the evil Nazi regime.

Cities and towns of the U.S.S.R. that our unit fought in as I remember:

Smolensk	Lenino	Orsa	Borisow
Minsk	Baranowice	Kobrin	Brest

Territory of Poland:

Parchew	Wlodowa	River Bug	Chelm
River Wiepszcz	Hrubieszow	Zamosc	Lublin
Lubartow	Deblin	Zeloczow	Siedlce
Minsk-Mazowiecki	Otwock	Modlin	Wolomin
Kalushin	Gura-Kalvarie	Praga-Warshawska	Warsaw
Plock	Wloclawek	Torun	Chelmno
Bydgoszcz		Grudziodz	

Territory of German Pomeria:

Zlotow	Jastrow	Rediretz	Tempelburg
Markish-Friedland		Dramburg	
Newsttetin	Falkenburg		
Paulus Dorff	Koslin	Koshalin	Kolberg
Swedvin	Nowgard	Szczecin	
Stargard and the River Oder			

On the Berlin:

Schwedt	Oberswalde	Oranienburg	Bernau
Furswalde	Wustesen	River Spree	
Potsdam			
Konings	Brandenburg Gate	Reichstag	

It was all over. We terminated our stand at Alexander-Platz in Berlin on May  
Second at 2 a.m. 1945

Medals and Decorations awarded me by  
the Polish Government

1. Cross for bravery awarded on October 14, 1944 for taking part in bitter fighting in White Russia at the town of Lenino near the city of Smolensk.
2. Silver Medal Virtuti Military in the Field of Glory for volunteering on a dangerous mission crossing the River Wisla in September 1944.
3. Special medal for liberating Warsaw, the capital city of Poland, on January 18, 1945.
4. For participation in freeing the Polish Capital of Warsaw, medal given by Marshal Stalin of the Soviet Union, January 1945.
5. Cross for Bravery and Gallantry in the Field of Glory, March 1945 for destroying two Tiger Tanks in Western Pomeria (Prussia).
6. Medal for Decisive Military Action over the German Rivers Oder and Neisse and the Baltic coast in Eastern Pomeria.
7. Cross for taking part in decisive hand to hand combat in the capital city of Berlin for twelve days and nights, including the Reichstag, May 2, 1945.
8. Medal from Marshal Stalin for taking part in defeating the German army in Berlin, May 2, 1945.
9. Victory over Germany, May 1945.

Plus many participating ribbons  
and certificates



(1)

This certificate No. 5-91-L was issued originally to me at my bedside in a field hospital in October 1943 near the city of Smolensk in the Soviet Union.

Cross for bravery in the town of Lenino in the Soviet Union.

At the end of the war in 1945 only a handful of soldiers from the First Polish Division were the proud holders of it.

This certificate is signed and presented to me by the President of Poland, Mr. Lech Walesa.

RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA

POSTANOWIENIEM

z dnia 18 września 1991 r.

Pan SZTORCH

.....  
Bernard

odznaczony/a zostało/a

## LEGITYMACJA

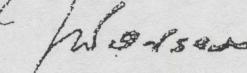
Nr 5-91 L

KRZYŻEM  
BITWY POD LENINO

WARSZAWA

dnia 18 września 1991 r.

PREZYDENT  
RZECZPOSPOLITEJ POLSKIEJ





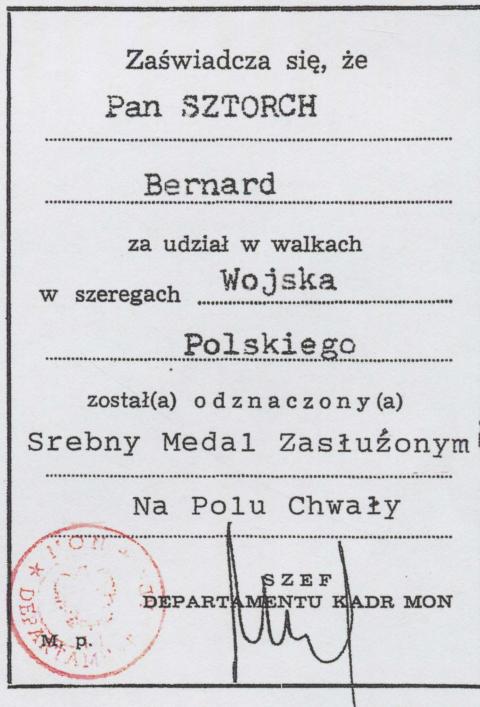
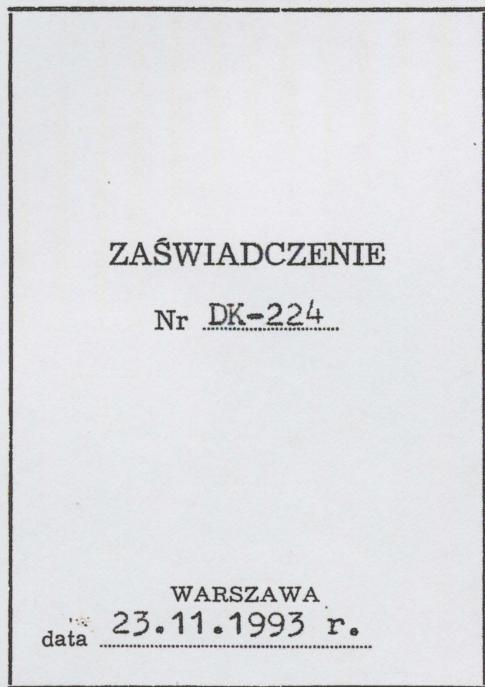
(2)

Certificate No. 224

Silver Medal in the Field of Glory

VIRTUTI MILITARY

For action taken in August 1944 on the right bank of the River Wisla  
City of Praga - Warsawska Poland

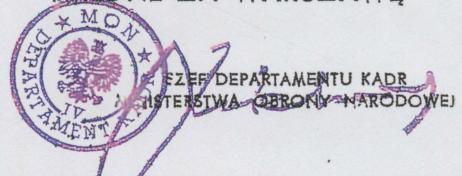




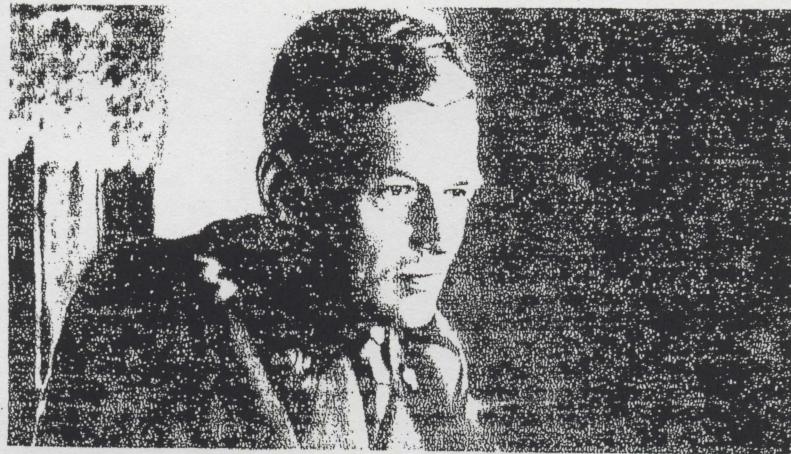
(3)

Certificate No. 7877 issued to me on October 26, 1945 by the Minister of Defense of the Polish Army.

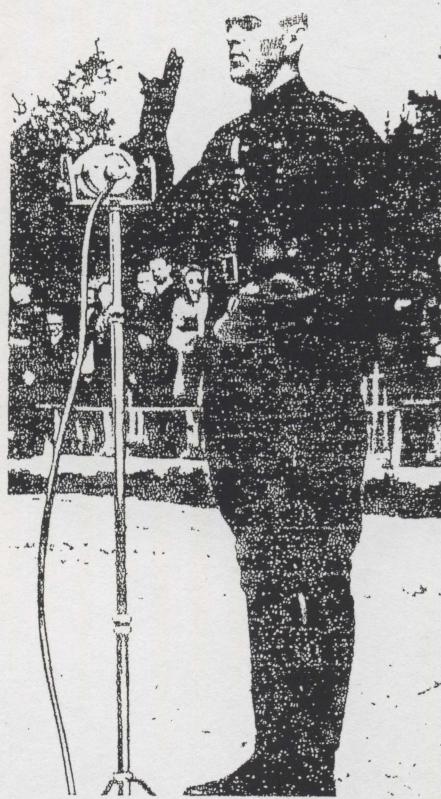
This distinguished medal was awarded to me for taking part in freeing the capital city of Warsaw from the German occupation on January 18, 1945. It is signed by the Chief of the Polish Defense Forces.

<p>POLSKA RZECZPOSPOLITA LUDOWA</p> <p>LEGITYMACJA Nr 7877</p> <p>Warszawa, dnia 31.07. 1991 r.</p>	<p>Na podstawie Dekretu Prezydium Krajowej Rady Narodowej z dnia 26 października 1945 r. o ustanowieniu „Medalu za Warszawę”</p> <p>MINISTER OBRONY NARODOWEJ</p> <p>n a d a t</p> <p>Ob. <u>SZTORCH Bernard</u></p> <p>s. Hermana</p> <p><b>MEDAL ZA WARSZAWĘ</b></p> 
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Aleksander Zawadzki, Deputy  
Commander-in-Chief of the  
Polish Army

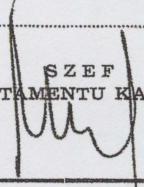


Commander of the Polish 1st Infantry Division Z. Berling takes the oath of allegiance



(5)

Certificate No. 224-D  
Cross for Bravery and Gallantry  
in the Field of Glory  
March 25, 1945  
vicinity of Markish-Friedland, East Prussia  
Germany

<p>ZAŚWIADCZENIE Nr <u>DK-224-6</u></p> <p>WARSZAWA data <u>23.11.1993 r.</u></p>	<p>Zaświedca się, że <u>Pan SZTORCH</u> <u>Bernard</u> za udział w walkach w szeregach <u>Wojska</u> <u>Polskiego</u> został(a) odznaczony(a) <u>Krzyżem Walecznych</u></p> <p></p>
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(6)

Peoples Republic of Poland

Certificate No. 14408

The Ruling National Presidium from October 26, 1945 established a special medal for taking decisive military action over the German river Neisse in Lower Silesia, the river Oder in Pomeria, and the Baltic coast in Eastern Pomeria.

The National Minister of Defense  
issued to  
Bernard Sztorch  
son of Herman

Medal for Oder, Neisse, and Baltic

signed by the  
National Defense Minister

Warsaw 7, 31, 1991

<p>POLSKA RZECZPOSPOLITA LUDOWA</p> <p>LEGITYMACJA Nr <u>14408</u></p> <p>Warszawa, dnia <u>31.07. 19.91.</u></p>	<p>Na podstawie Dekrebu Prezydium Krajowej Rady Narodowej z dnia 26 października 1945 r. o ustanowieniu „Medalu za Odrę, Nyę, Bałtyk”</p> <p>MINISTER OBRONY NARODOWEJ</p> <p>n a d a t</p> <p>Ob. <u>SZTORCH Bernard</u></p> <p><u>s. Hermana</u></p> <p>„MEDAL ZA ODRĘ, NYĘ, BAŁTYK”</p> <p></p> <p>SZEF DEPARTAMENTU KADR MINISTERSTWA OBRONY NARODOWEJ</p>
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People's Republic of Poland

Certificate No. 125879

The Polish National Ministry of Defense  
 Article One of April 21, 1966 states that  
 a medal be given to  
**Bernard Sztorch**  
 son of Herman  
 for taking part in the heroic and decisive battle  
 for the German capital, Berlin

Warsaw 7, 31, 1991

Signed by  
 National Defense Minister

<p>POLSKA RZECZPOSPOLITA LUDOWA</p> <p>LEGITYMACJA Nr 125879</p> <p>Warszawa, data 1991-07-31</p>	<p>MINISTERSTWO OBRONY NARODOWEJ</p> <p>Na podstawie art. 1 ust. 3 ustawy z dnia    21 kwietnia 1966 r.</p> <p>nadaje</p> <p>Ob. <u>SZTORCH Bernard</u></p> <p><u>s. Hermana</u></p> <p>MEDAL ZA UDZIAŁ W WALKACH O BERLIN</p> <p>MINISTER OBRONY NARODOWEJ</p>  <p><i>M. M. Witek</i></p>
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Certificate No. 234738

The Ruling National Presidium  
from October 26, 1945  
established a medal for  
Victory and Independence

The National Minister of Defense  
issued to  
Bernard Sztorch  
son of Herman  
on the day of May 9, 1945

## Medal Victory and Independence 1945

Warsaw 7, 2, 1992

Signed by  
National Defense Minister

POLSKA RZECZPOSPOLITA LUDOWA

LEGITYMACJA Nr 222781

Warszawa, data 12.92-07-24



(1)

Special Certificate

Long Live Free Democratic Poland Death to the German Invaders.

To the participants in the military action and freeing of the suburb city Praga Warszawska from the German invaders to you;

Bernard Storch Kap.

From the Order Number 25 by the Commander of the Polish Army General Michael Roli Zymierski

15 October 1944

I thank the officers and soldiers of the first Polish Infantry Division named Tadeusz Kościuszko for setting an example to the entire Polish Army.

October 1944, Battery Commander, Captain J. Roskow.  
Round Stamp

Śmierć najeźdźcom niemieckim!

Niech żyje Wolna, Demokratyczna Polska!

Uczestnikowi walk o wyzwolenie spod jarzma niemieckiego  
przedmieścia Warszawy — PRAGI

BERNARD SZTDRCH kap.

(imię, nazwisko, stopień wojskowy)

Wyciąg z rozkazu № 25

Naczelnego Dowódcy W. P.  
gen. broni Michała Roliego Zymierskiego  
z dnia 15. 10. 1944 r.  
»Wyrażam podziękowanie oficerom, podoficerom i żołnierzom Dywizji  
im. Tadeusza Kościuszki  
i stawiam ich za wzór caemu Wojsku Polskiemu»

Wyciąg z rozkazu

Wodza Naczelnego Armii Czerwonej  
Marszałka Józefa Stalina  
z dnia 14. 10. 1944 r.  
»Za świetne działania wojenne wyrażam  
wdzięczność formacjom  
I Armii Polskiej,  
które brały udział w oswobождении Праги

Wrzesień 1944 r.

D-ca jednostki

*J. Roskow*





Long Live Free Democratic Poland  
Death to the German Invaders

To the participants in the military action and  
freeing of this suburb of the city of Warsaw

(2)

Praga

from the German invaders

Bernard Sztorch Kap.

By the order of the Commander-in-Chief  
of the Red Army

Marshal Josef Stalin

14 October 1944

For brilliant military operations  
I am expressing sincere appreciation to the  
First Polish Army who took part in  
freeing the city of Praga Warszawska

Smierć najazdcom niemieckim!

Niech żyje Wolna, Demokratyczna Polska!

Uczestnikowi walk o wyzwolenie spod jarzma niemieckiego  
przedmieścia Warszawy — PRAGI

BERNARD SZTORCH kap.

(imię, nazwisko, stopień wojskowy)

Wyciąg z rozkazu № 25

Naczelnego Dowódcy W. P.  
gen. broni Michała Roli-Żymierskiego  
z dnia 15. 10. 1944 r.

Wyrażam podziękowanie oficerom, podoficerom i żołnierzom Dywizji  
im. Tadeusza Kościuszki  
i stawiam ich za wzór całemu Wojsku Polskiemu.

Wyciąg z rozkazu

Wodza Naczelnego Armii Czerwonej  
Marszałka Józefa Stalina  
z dnia 14. 10. 1944 r.  
Za świetne działania wojenne wyrażam  
wdzięczność formacjom  
1 Armii Polskiej,  
które brały udział w oswobождении Pragi

Wrzesień 1944 r.

D-ca jednostki

*S. Sztorch*





(3)

18 January 1945

Long Live Free Democratic Poland

Death to the German Invaders.

To the active participants who took part in freeing the Polish Capital Warsaw, Sztorch Bernard Kap. By the order of Marshal Stalin, for active military participation by the First Polish Army and the bravery of its soldiers my sincere thanks to you who took part in freeing the city of Warsaw.

Commander of First Artillery Regiment  
Colonel Guretzki

Round stamp

18 January, 1945  
Citation for Bravery in the battle  
For Warsaw received by Bernhard  
Storch Citation has Joseph Stalin's  
Approval. Collection Bernhard Storch



18 stycznia 1945 r.

Niech żyje Wolna  
Demokratyczna Polska!

Śmierć niemieckim  
najeźdźcom!

Uczestnikowi o wyzwolenie  
z niemieckiego rajza Stolicy Polski  
W A R S Z A W Y

SZTORCH. BERNARD. Kap.

Wyciąg z rozkazu marszałka STALINA:  
Za wzorowe działania bojowe i za podziękowanie wojskom Pierwszej  
Armii Polskiej, które brały udział w wyzwolenie Warszawy.

miejsce pieczęci

d-ka pułku

na mocy zapisu



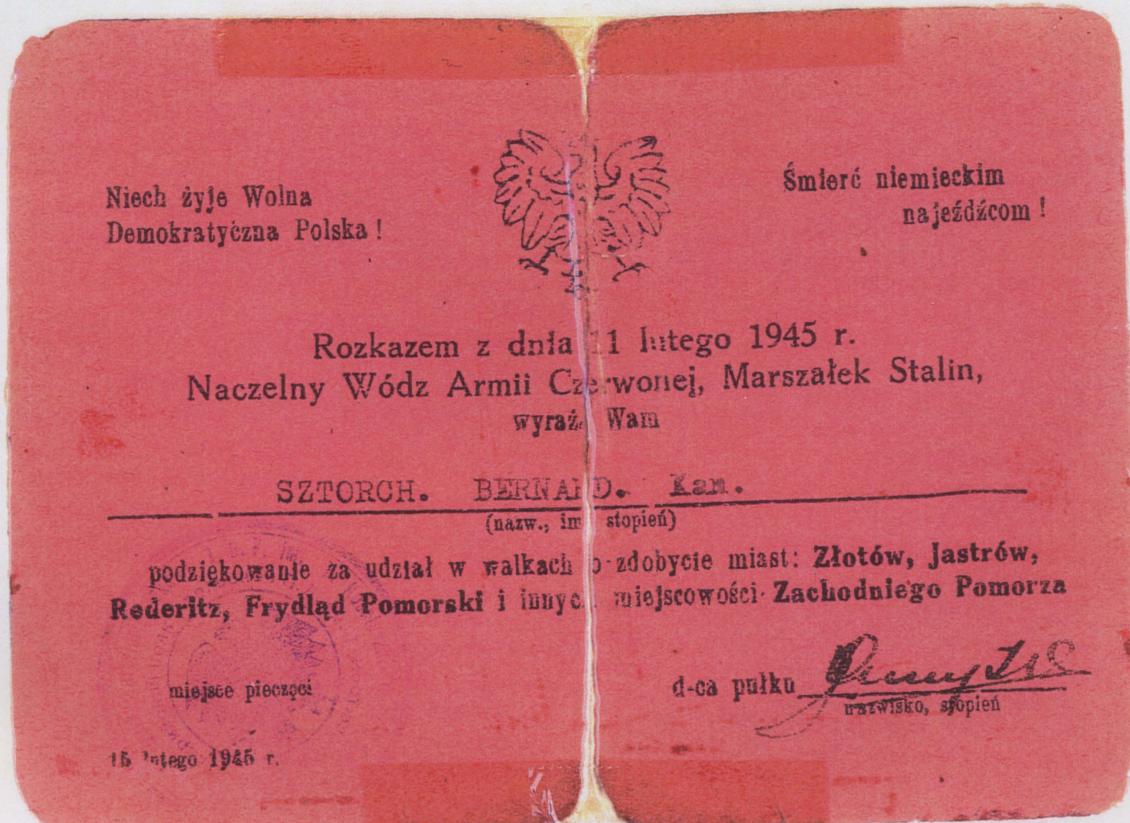
(4)

Long Live Free Democratic Poland Death to the German Invaders

Order given on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1945 by the Commander-in-chief of the Red Army Marshal Stalin expresses to you Kap. Sztorch Bernard

I thank you for taking part in the victory over the cities of Złotów, Jastrow, Rederitz, Merkish – Frydland, and many other cities and towns in Eastern Pomeria.

Commander of First Artillery Regiment  
Colonel Guretzki  
15 February 1945  
Round Stamp





(5)

Long Live Free Democratic Poland Death to the German Invaders.  
To the participants in the victories over these cities in Eastern Pomeria:  
Tempelburg, Falkenburg, Dramburg

Sztorch Bernard Kap.

Order given by Marshal Josef Stalin on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 1945, for a brilliant military victory I am grateful to the heroic soldiers of the First Polish Army, for breaking through the German defense lines west of the city of Stargard and capturing three important cities of Tempelburg, Falkenburg, Dramburg. In honor of this victory and in honor of the First White Russian Front and the First Polish Army, in Moscow on March 4<sup>th</sup> 1945 an order was given for a Twenty Round salute from 224 artillery cannon salvos.

Commander of the First Artillery Regiment, Colonel Guretzki, March 4<sup>th</sup> 1945.  
Round stamp





(6)

Commander in chief of the Polish Army General Michael Roli Zymierski  
Death to the German Invaders. In the name of the people to you Sztorsch Bernard, Kap.

Order Number 71, April 17, 1945.

Thank you so much for taking part in this historic action in forcibly crossing the River Oder, the First Polish Army was instrumental establishing the new Polish borders, thus freeing land whose Polish origin goes back over four hundred years. I also thank you for taking part in crossing the rivers Bug and Wisla and freeing our capital city Warsaw and driving the German Army out of the Baltic territory, and giving a new sense of pride to our country and our democratic republic which you helped free from temporary occupation. We shall march forward to Poland of tomorrow, together with our allies we shall march to victory over our common enemy.

Round Stamp

Regiment Commander  
Colonel Guretzki

Battery Commander  
Major Janowski(7)

General Dowódca Wojska Polskiego  
Gen. bryg. Mieczysław Zymierski  
1 Maja 1945 r.

Wyrażam Panu Sztorschowi Bernardowi

Smierć niemieckim najazdem!

roku 1945. nr. 71.2 dn. 17.4.45.

z GŁĘBOKIEM I GŁĘBOKIEM  
za nasz udział w historycznym sforsowaniu przed  
jednostki 1-ej Armii P.P. rzeki Odra i prze-  
niesieniu boju poza granice Odrodzionego Państ-  
wa Polskiego na terytorium sowieckie. Jednak  
że

Pragnęcie do kraju swojego narodu i rodzinę powrócić nie mówiąc  
pierwotnie ziemie województw, a następnie sforsowali natknie polskich rod-  
ziny wyzwolili Warszawę, przywróciły miasta odwieczne polskie ziemie nad  
Bałtykiem i zwolnili te same nowe lądy od wieco narodowej chwasty Wehr-  
machtu swiata zakończyły się w dniu 17 kwietnia 1945 r. wojny z  
Adanis Aragowej nadziei Narodowej i ludzi Tysiące wojowników zasłużonych dla  
okoj, który przyniósł Marta od zwycięstwa i wolności i nadzieję powro-  
du swego narodowi jutro Polaki, Supuł zasłużone zasłużonych Aran, Górnicy  
nie ustępująci ani skrajnej żądze żądającej i żądającej i żądającej zaszczytu i  
jednocześnie estetyczne dozynającego skutki.

2-cs dowódca 20 Artyl.

*Surmont*



*Yanowka*



Long Live Free Democratic Poland  
Death to the German Invaders

To you the participants in breaking the defenses of the German Army and forcibly crossing the eastern bank of the River Oder to you Sztorsch Bernard, by the order of Marszal Stalin

23 April 1945

Order Number 339

For the example given by the First Polish Army I, sincerely express my thanks to you for forcibly crossing the River Oder and breaking the defense lines of the German Army on the eastern bank of the River Oder.

April 24, 1945

Battery Commander

Round Stamp

Major Janowski





(7)

Long Live Free Democratic Poland  
Death to the German Invaders  
To you for taking part in  
encircling the city of  
Berlin

Sztorch Bernard Kap.

by order of Marshal Stalin  
25 April 1945

For executing military orders with pride.  
I express my sincerest thanks to the  
First Polish Army  
which took part in encircling  
the city of Berlin

Battery Commander  
Major Janorwski

25 April 1945

Round stamp





(8)

Long Live Free Democratic Poland  
Death to the German Invaders

To the victors of  
Berlin

Order Number 359  
May 2, 1945

by the chief of the Red Army  
Marshal Stalin  
to you  
Sztorch Bernard Kap.

Sincerest thanks to you for taking part in the  
victory over Germany and the  
victory over the city of  
Berlin.

May 2, 1945

Round stamp

Battery Commander  
Major

Janowski

Niech żyje Wolna  
Demokratyczna Polska!



Smierć niemieckim  
najeźdźcom!

## Zdobywcom Berlina

Rozkazem z dnia 2 maja 1945 r. Nr. 359

Naczelnny Wódz Armii Czerwonej

Marszałek Stalin

wyraża Wam

SZTORCH BERNARD KAN.

..... nazwisko, imię, stopień

podziękowanie za udział w walkach o zdobycie gniazda niemieckiego imperializmu — Berlina.

25. 1945 r.

Dowódca jednostki



My definition of hate is ignorance , lock of respect toward another human being, or any being created by God. It cannot be ignored or tolerated however small it may look to us .As past history has shown, a small fire eventually becomes uncontrollable.

So it was in Germany, ignorance, naivete, and tolerance enabled the Nazi regime to surge forward with a plan for the destruction of Jews, Gypsies, intellectuals and all other minorities in the occupied countries of Europe by the Germans, especially in Poland and in Russia.

If the free world would have intervened on October 15,1938, when the German Government suddenly decided to get rid of all the Jews born in Poland, and those living in Germany for generations, obeying all the laws of that Country, simply and virtually with out any belongings or money brought them to the Polish borders in upper Silesia shooting over their hats. For days they were stranded outside in freezing rain, and the Polish Government would not let them in , among them was my future wife, who was born and educated in Germany.

The world stood by in silence and the doors were wide open for the tragedy which followed on Nov, 9,1938 the beginning of Holocaust started with Kristalnacht when over 250 synagogues were set afire , Jews in Germany were killed and thousands send to concentration camps of Dachau, Sachsenchausen, and others.

Safe in the silence of the rest of the World , the destruction of European Jews begin. One should remember that the population of Germany in 1938 was 66,000,000 with about 550,000 Jews only. So as you can see ,small fire of group cannot be ignored. While in school I did not suffer any injustice from my fellow Christian students, and was able to participate in sports events in school, but you would come across a bully throwing at you anti Semitic slurs. Fortunately I have never been harmed bodily. Our Cities population was 20,000 among them 2,500 Jews. In our City Jews had lived among our Christian neighbors since the 400 BC.

Prelude to Hate Poland 1930. The right wing National Democratic Party had a powerful leader in the 1930's . Jews occupied 10% of the population. Jews were living in Poland for thousands of years. The leader of the National Democratic Party, Mr. Dumowski ÓdeclaredÓ that this is 8 % to many of them.

In 1935 the leader of the Polish Government Marshal Josef Pilsudski died. He was a true democrat, and protector of all minorities, especially the Jews. After his death a new government was in power and the reactionaries took over.

At the top was General Smigly--Ritz, President, Professor Ignacy Moscicki, Foreign Minister, Josef Beck, and Church Leader Cardinal Glomb.

In 1937 the Polish foreign Minister Josef Beck stated, I remember it well, with my father becoming very upset with that statement by Mr.Bech who said that in



Poland we have 3,500,000 Jews among us , and Poland has only room for only 500,000, therefore 3,000,000 has to leave Poland now. After the War in 1945, as we know now, only about 250,000 survived only 25,000 had survived the Holocaust in Poland about 160,000 were saved in the slave labor camps of Siberia U.S.S.R. and the rest died fighting Nazis in the Forests and on the battle field in the Polish Army.

Since 1937. Jewish segregation was established at Polish Universities, and Jewish students had to sit segregated from their Gentile colleagues. Because the Government, and the Church stood by ignoring schools regulations the doors were wide open for the incoming Holocaust & Extermination Camps in Poland.



Recollections from July 23, 1944

MAJDANEK EXTERMINATION CAM P  
CITY LUBLIN, POLAND, 7/23/1944

The story of Extermination Camp Majdanek, has not perhaps been fully told. Majdanek was the First Extermination Camp Liberated, and fully operational when I had entered it on a hot day July 23, 1944. As we advanced, I learned of enormous atrocities by the German Army, with a large number of killings spread over a wide area in White Russia which added far more then Majdanek, it didn't have the past monumental industrial death factory, just two miles from a large historical City of Lublin, once a Capital of Poland, and the cradle of Jewish learning.

I entered this Camp unaware what was going on there, I ,and the rest of my soldiers assumed that this was a military camp, or a factory. We had no warning of it, and we were not prepared for the sight which followed.. Let me describe what I have seen as a front line soldier which took part Liberating Three Death Camps in Poland, and One Concentration Camp located only 35 klm from the German Capital Berlin. Now I will single out the first one Majdanek to the my knowledge Majdanek was erected in latter part of 1942.

You cannot possible imagine the devastating impact it has on a front line soldier upon entering factory like buildings and discovering that the facility was a Death Camp, where over 1,500.000 innocent men, women and children from all over the Europe lost their lives, including 5,000 Polish Jewish Soldiers held near by prisoner of war camp. What I have seen upon entering this Camp was; a large Building , as I remember there was a sign pointing to a Bad Und Disinfection{sanitary and bath house} the inside of this Barrack was made of concrete, with benches all around the room. In the next rooms were large Square Concrete Structures without windows, with a small skylight in the ceiling I think that there were Six Rooms on each site, with heavy steel doors, each door had a n inspection peephole.

Between the two large buildings were dozens of similar light green Barracks, filled with apparel, luggage, and personal belongings. You had to pass dozens same type of Barracks on the way to a crematorium at the other end, as I recall, perhaps half klm. away. On this sad assignment I also saw Warehouses of Boots, Shoes and Little Shoes by the thousands all sorted out to perfection German style. Little farther down the road was an enormous Mountain of White Ashes with small bones. We had orders to rush back, but not before i had to investigate this large structure with tall chimneys which turn out to be the Crematorium with Six or Seven enormous furnaces, full of human bodies and bones still in them.

After this scene the first think came to my mind who were those people in those furnaces, and why they were there. Many thinks ran through my mind. Perhaps those



remains were my own family. We did not know to this point about Extermination Camps. And what did I do that moment came spontaneous. I recited the prayer for the death, and all soldiers assembled did the same. To this day, this picture is in front of my eyes. After leaving that inferno I faced another one about two /km away was the front line. So all of us had to recover instantly and concentrate for a long road ahead, and pray that we will survive, and remember what we had seen there.

It was a very long, cruel, and tragic war. I had lost my entire family friend and schoolmates. Painful as it is I decided to inform as many as I can reach, so that those kind of atrocities should never happen again to any human being on this earth, and that we all should live in peace and harmony with our fellow Human.

About January 23, 1945 we liberated a small town of Chelmno in the Northwestern part of Poland located between the cities of Lodz - Bydgoszcz and Torun on the Narew River. This town is located on a direct line, and short distance away from the German - Polish Border.

In this small town the destruction of European Jews began on December 7, 1941. The mass killing of Jews from near by towns, by gas, took place in Chelmno. At the time of liberation 350,000 Jews lost their lives in the most cruel way. Only two young boys were liberated to bare witness.

Chelmno the first Nazi camp in which mass executions were carried out by means of gas, and the first site for mass killings within the framework of the 'FINAL SOLUTION' outside the area of Nazi occupation in the USSR. The camp was destined to serve as a center for extermination of the Jews in the Lodz ghetto and the entire Warthengau region, which had been annexed to the Third Reich. It was located in the Polish village of Chelmno, some 50 miles west of Lodz in the Kolo district.

The camp was set up in a castle own by a Polish Prince, inside the village, which served as a reception and extermination center for the victims and as a residence for the camp staff in the Ruzowski Forest, in which mass graves and cremation ovens were located. Beginning in December 1941, three gas vans were operated in the Chelmno camp. They were special build Renault trucks, hermetically sealed inside and with double doors. On the outside they looked like a furniture delivery vans. After the vans had been filled with 70 victims the driver locked the doors entered the truck cab, and switched on the engine, then minutes latter all victims were dead.

My battery entered the site on January on the 23<sup>rd</sup> 1945 only mass graves were visible in the forest, the ground was full of human bones all around as a grisly reminder of the murder committed by the Nazis during the war on the Jewish people, and other nationalities in Europe, and where ever the Nazi occupation occurred.



Fifty Five year ago on October 12,1943 for the first time in the Polish history, the First Infantry Division named Tadeusz Kosciuszko ,from the first Polish Army had its first military engagement on the U.S.S.R. Territory, and so began glorious beginning for the First Division Soldiers, but it was not cheap. as always for freedom you pay the price. My first military action took place Oct,12, 1943 and lasted two days in the town of Lenino, vicinity of Mohylewo, Bialorus Region of Smolensk.

This event was recorded in the annals of the Polish history books, as the first successful military engagement by the Polish Army on the USSR territory in World War Two. The First Division was under the command of Gen. Zigmund Berling.

The First Division was incorporated with the USSR 33rd Army on the main Western Front. Our assignment was to break the German defense lines in the vicinity of Lenino to close the exit to the river Dniepr 22 km from the front lines. and seize a beachhead on the other site of river Dniepr.

The German Army had excellent entrenchments and easy to defend positions along the largest swamps in Europe stretching along the River Mierej, in the depth of 40 km {22 miles}. On that day I was a Goner in a 82 millimeter Mortar company, with the Non Commissioned Academy .

On the early cold morning of Oct 12, 1943 in a foreign Country, once bitter enemy of Poland the First Polish Division comprised of Three infantry regiments, One Artillery, regiment, one 122 mi. mortar regiment, four 81 mil. companies, we were ably to break through the German defense positions in the depth of 2-5-4 km, crossing the Swamps in the vicinity of the Mierej River.

Do to bad terrain we did not have any Tank support which was vital in any offensive operation, in this case they would have sank in the swamp with heavy losses to men and machines. The Soviet units could not budge from their positions, so the main part of the attack fell on the First Division soldiers. After Six hours of heavy fighting my unit occupied Village of Polzuchy, and fought back gallantly two German contra-attacks ,we continued the attacks on the Village of Lenino. Unfortunately after a German strong contra- attack, we could not hold all the territory including Lenino.

On October 13,1943 my first Division resumed the attack on the enemy, but strong counter attacks by the German units from the ninth army, and from the air I received orders to disengage from the enemy and relinquish some positions. On Oct.18,1943 we interrupted the offensive, and reinforced the division. This front line continued to change hands until June 1944, when under the direction of the First White Russian front Commander Marshal Konstantine Rokossowski who was Polish born in Russia. The offensive resumed the first week of June for good.

The Polish soldiers who fought in Lenino received high praises from the top Soviet high Command. This was a bloody maiden engagement. The First Infantry Division on Sept1st. 1943 on the day I left the training Camp we had about 13,000



soldiers we lost 3,000 from the 12 to 18 Oct.1943, among them the only Jewish Chaplain, Rabbi Hershel Zawada, and 56 other Jewish soldiers. I was among the lucky ones my company had 45 casualties, 25 fatalities, on the happier note I was awarded with my first medal, a special Cross for Lenino, and I m very proud of it.

Now time is ticking away, not to many of my comrades in arms survived the slaughter from Oct 12, 1943 to May 2nd 1945. To best of my knowledge at the end of War in 1945, there were only 256 original soldiers from the First Division who came out without a scratch from the War. At a special ceremony in October 1945, I received a oversized certificate after my discharge in Katowice, Poland from a high ranking official. Because of the size I did not take it along on my departure from Poland in Feb.1946. I wish I did.

Politic played a big role in Russia, as far as Polish citizens in Soviet Slave labor camps in Siberia. There were about 2,00.000 Polish people who fell to the Soviet oppression between September 1939 and June 1941 many of the Prisoners of war. After Germany declared war on Soviet Union, an agreement was reached between Churchill , Roosevelt, Stalin and Gen. Wladislaw Sikorski the chief of the Polish Forces in Britain. Soon after Polish citizens were released from Siberian labor camps, a Polish Army started to organize in the vicinity of Kulbishow Saratow on the Volga River not far from Stalingrad. Progress was very slow, first we had to come to ourselves get on the feet. None of us was ready for military duty, and we were not mentally prepared and fit for Army service, in a Country that had given us lot of grief. With in a short time the situation had changed, after the swearing in ceremony, by then all of us had their assignments and motive.

Myself, my only aim was to get home, see my family then if need be continue with the liberation of our Country not knowing about the situation at home and what to expect.

According to rumors we supposed to have fought on the Eastern and Western fronts as soon as the units were ready. As I found out latter the situation change drastically when two divisions left Russia via Iran late summer 1942 . In all about 140.000 including families left. After that the borders were closed, and no one was allowed to travel with out a permit from the NKVD.

In November 1942, I was notified by the Polish authorities in Kulbishow USSR that again there will be a formation of the First Volunteer Polish Division, and it will fight only on the Eastern Front. When the War ended in 1945, 500,000 Polish soldiers bare arms.



Berlin, Germany, April 20, 1945 through May 9th 1945

It was a long, cruel war with enormous destruction of human lives and properties. My recollections are that the preparations for the battle of Berlin began as far as the end of August 1944 by our artillery regiment, and the rest of the division, and the rest of the Armies on the Eastern front.

The Polish Army had their own Leadership, with Marshal Rola Zymierski, Gen. Zygmunt Berling, Gen. Poplowski and many others. Never the less we were under the command of the First Bialorussian Front. Its commanders were: Marshal Konstantin Rokossovski who led us from White Russia to Poland on to the right bank of the Wisla River, opposite Warsaw, and Marshal George K. Zhukov from Warsaw to Berlin.

The last, and critical offensive began on April 16, 1945 4 AM on the River Oder with a 40,000 artillery cannons blasting away for over Two hours. It was a night that I could never forget. I was in charge of my cannon, and my cannon alone send over 350 shells each weighing over 80 lb. All bridges over the largest river in East, were blown up by the enemy. The enemy was well prepared, and did put up a terrific struggle. The Germans with the help of slave labor built excellent bunkers on the other side of the river with fortifications and mine fields, but we had one think on our minds to see the victory. Our losses were very high, the river was full of blood and bodies. I had orders to advance and not look back. My unit was across the river April 16, 1945 at about 7 AM. My unit or battery encountered strong resistance in the area of Zelo heights some 7 km West of the River, but after a long day the battle for the heights was over. On the 20 of April I reached the outskirts of BERLIN. Words cannot express the feeling I had personally, and what was going through my mine.

You have to realize and understand as a soldier and as a Jew who fought for his Country and its Flag which was Poland, and at the age of sixteen, had to leave behind his mother, three younger brothers, his grandparents, relatives, schoolmates and friends, and never see them alive again, and not knowing about their fate since the beginning of March 1945, when I received an answer to my letter written on January 20, 1945 to the Mayor of my home town of Bochnia, Poland, stating that, the Ghetto Bochnia was liquidated by the Germans during July 1942, and August 1943, and transported to the Extermination Camps of Auschwitz and Belz. My grandparents together with 1500 older Jews were shot in a forest 7 km, north from Bochnia.

How did I react to a situation as tragic as the one I have mentioned? Well I did like a good soldier would. First in Pomeria {Prussia} near city Merkish Friedland I was responsible destroying two Tiger Tanks from the SS Himler Division with a special armor piercing shells, for which I received a cross for Bravery and Gallantry in the Field of Glory. Seeing the two tanks in flames was to say, never again will our people be accused of not fighting back when they have the right tools.

In Berlin, the destruction in human lives were enormous in the polish Army



and the Russian Army, the same was with the German Army, and its population, but the asked for it we did not. We only responded to their invasion, and to the atrocities they committed in our lands. The properties were rebuilt but the young soldiers many of them would never see the end of the War, Fifty Five Million people lost their lives in World War Two.

Myself, I still had hoped that the letter I had received from the Mayor will prove him wrong. On May 9th, 1945, the First Division, minus hundreds of soldiers who lost their lives in the last days of the war, were departing from Berlin via railroad train to Poland City Siedlce, 70 km. east from Warsaw. June 2nd 1945, I returned home on a pass. No one from my family or relatives survived the war. My home was demolished. My Fathers Tombstone was removed from His grave by the Germans.

My good Polish neighbors were there, they almost fainted upon seeing me in the polish uniform, they knew that I was send away to the Slave labor camp in Siberia. There was not much I could say, except ask them what has happened to my family and who demolished our home.

I left this place the same day, never to return to the place of my birth, just crying in silence. After my discharge from the army in September 1945, I took up residence in upper Silesia City Katowice, were I married my wife Ruth on Nov, 18, 1945 we left Poland early Spring 1946, came to the United States April 22 1947.

I received Three highest decorations given by the Polish Army, and Seven campaign Medals. All this was send over to the Polish Consulate in N. Y. by the President of Poland Mr. Lech Walesa between years 1992 and 1994 with a large ceremony at the Consulate in New York in my Honor.



Name: Bernhard Storch

Address:

PII Redacted

Telephone:

Date of Birth: November 10, 1922

Place of Birth: Bochnia, Poland (33 km. West of Krakow)

On September 1, 1939, while apprenticing in my profession and residing with my uncle and his family in Upper Silesia, Poland, in the city of Chorzow, just 3.5 km, from the German border, war erupted between Germany and Poland. Since my uncle and his family were on vacation, I decided to depart Chorzow and return home to my mother and 3 younger brothers who were 13, 11, and 7, years old. My father died in August 1937, at the age of 43. He was a World War One hero and served in Poland with the Austrian Army and fought against the Russian invasion in 1914. He was wounded in 1917, and decorated three times. The 110 km. trip home took me past then, through insignificant city of Oswiencim ( or Auschwitz )

Upon arriving home September 3, 1939, my mother urged me to go to a safer place with her two brothers near River Wisla. I intended to return home when the war ended, little knowing that this would be the last time I would see my family alive.

After wandering for twelve days, under constant bombardment from the German Air force, I found myself in western Poland in the city of Lwow. In the third week, the U.S.S.R. declared war on Poland, and by September 27, 1939 the war in Poland ended. I was stranded there without my family and clothes, and no future in sight, with a very severe winter approaching fast.

In May 1940, without warning, the Russian NKVD or Secret Police, entered my room in the middle of the night and took me and all others to a secluded railroad stop. The loaded us into a transport railroad car and I was on the way to an unknown destination. After three weeks, I found myself deep in Siberia with nothing to see but tremendous forests and dilapidated small houses without any facilities without running water or electricity, except a wood burning stove, with a steel plate for cooking. I was some 300 km. from the Ural Mountains, guarded by the NKVD. My job was to clear the forest in this severe weather of over 65 below zero.

On June 22, 1941, war erupted between Germany and Russia. Shortly after, a treaty was signed by the United States, Great Britain and Soviet Union. As a result, all Polish citizens were freed from the Slave Labor Camps. I had no idea were to go in this strange country. I had no maps, clothing, food or money.

At some point, I found out that the Polish Army was being organized in Central Asia near the city Tashkent in the vicinity of Yangiyul. After extensive travel, without accommodations, I reached the recruitment point, but it was too late. In November 1942, I was notified by the Polish authority that a volunteer First Division would be forming in

## PII Redacted

Central Russia. I send my application and in March 1943, I was notified to report for duty.

I enlisted in the First Polish Division named Tadeusz Kosciuszko. I was assigned to a Mortar Company as a gunner. Six weeks later I entered the Non-Commissioned Academy. On September 1, 1943, I was ordered to the front line some 65 km away. On October 12, 1943 I had my maiden encounter against the Center of the German Army. We advanced 5 km. with heavy losses to my unit. For the first time in my short military career, I was awarded a Cross for Bravery by my Commander.

After being discharged from the field hospital in late November 1943, I was assigned to the First Artillery Regiment in charge of a Howitzer cannon. From that day on I fought the German Army through all White Russia, the entire length of Central Poland, East & West Prussia, and ended just a few blocks past the Reichstag in Berlin, Germany.

I helped to liberate the following Extermination Camps in Poland; Sobibor, July 22, 1944, Majdanek, July 23, 1944, Chelmno, January 24, 1945.

After our final offensive on April 16, 1945 across the River Oder in Germany, into the city of Oranienburg, I entered the Concentration Camp Sachsenhausen. Thousands of victims were still alive in deplorable condition, from all over Europe.

After seeing what I had seen to this point, my hope of seeing my family again had dwindled away. This Camp was located only 35 km. from Berlin. I fought in Berlin twelve days and nights in hand to hand combat which finally ended on May 2, 1945.

Then it was time to go home on May 9th 1945, but for me there was nobody there. I lost them all, my entire family, including my mother, brothers, grandparents, relatives, friends and schoolmates. Even my fathers tombstone was removed from his grave site.

I was discharged from the army in September 1945, and married my wife Ruth on November 18, 1945. We left Poland in early Spring of 1946 and came to the United States, April 22, 1947. We have two children, and four grandchildren.

PS This Bio was requested by the White House  
On July 27, 1994 for the upcoming trip by the  
Vice President Al Gore to Poland. It was not known  
To me at that time for what purpose this Bio was  
needed. Eventually, I received a phone call on July,  
30, 1994, that a trip is scheduled to depart from Washington  
DC, on July 31, 1994, to Warsaw, Poland.



THE FIRST DIVISION OATH --- July 15, 1943

I SWEAR

On my honor I take this oath that I am willing to sacrifice my life for the Polish Nation, and I will serve and fight the German Army until our beloved country is free.

I SWEAR

To the Polish Land and the Polish People that I will honestly do my soldier's duty to defend and to fight any time and place. I will keep my military secrets and carry out orders given me by my Superior Officers.

I SWEAR

That I will maintain my loyalty to the USSR forgiving me a rifle in my hands to fight the Common Enemy, and to maintain brotherhood among soldiers.

I SWEAR

Loyalty to the Division Banner and Password of our Fathers, theirs and our freedom.

I SWEAR

To the Polish Land and its People that I will give my last drop of blood and my last breath that I will hate the enemy for the destruction of Poland, and for the suffering and murder of Polish People until my country is free. I am willing to live and die like an honest Polish Soldier.

SO HELP ME GOD.



## GENERAL ZIGMUNT BERLING

27 April 1896 ---- 11 July 1980

General Zigmunt Berling was born in Limanowa in the Carpathian mountains to an educated intellectual family with good means. While a student he took an active part with the underground organizing for freedom and independence. He was a gun club sharpshooter and rifleman, when World War I erupted he volunteered for duty to the Polish Legion, and fought in the Polish Legion Corps in the Austrian Army with the rank of corporal. From Sept, 1914 he led a platoon as a buck Sgt. in the 2nd Infantry Regiment, of the Polish Legion. After completion of his officers training in 1915, he advanced to the rank of 1st Lt. in charge as a Rifle platoon leader in the 4th Infantry Legion.

In January 1917 he advanced in rank to 2nd Lt. In Jan.1917 he was arrested for refusal to take the oath to serve in the Austrian Army. He volunteered to serve in the Legion as a citizen duty because the country was occupied and to keep up his training as a soldier and patriot. There were many Polish officers arrested in that period, including Gen. Josef Pilsudski. At the moment Poland won its independence in November 1918 he joined the Polish Army as a Company Commander in the 4th Regiment with the rank of lieutenant. In February 1920 he was a Captain and Commander of the 5th Kielce Rifle Battalion. In 1921-1923, he was Battalion Commander of the 4th Infantry, and the 59th Infantry Regiment of the Legion.

In November 1923 his rank was Major, and was send to a higher military school in Warsaw. After completion, he advanced and became Chief of Staff of the 15th Infantry Division. In 1927 he graduated with a law degree from the Jagiellonian University in Kracow, Poland.

In 1930 he advanced in rank to Lt.Col. In 1927 through 1932 his duties were Division Chief of Staff in the Krakow Region of the Polish Armed Forces, and the Chief of Staff of the Military Group in the State of Kracow. from Nov, 1932 through March 1937 he held the position of Commander of 6th Infantry Legion Regiment.

From march 1937 to June 1939, he was the Commander of 4th Infantry Regiment in the State of Kielce. To settle family problems, Gen.Berling took a leave of absence, when the war erupted between Poland and Germany, on September 1st 1939 he was called to duty.



After the war was lost to Germany and Russia Sept 27th 1939, he was taken to a prisoner of war camp in Katin Forest. He with 400 other prisoners among them Gen. Wladislaw Anders, were reassigned to a new location from where they were send to the town of Malachuwce near Moscow to work on the formation of Polish military units in agreement with the USSR. In June 1941, a decision was made to organize one Division. On the 30th June an agreement was signed between the Polish Government in exile by General Wladislaw Sikorski and the Soviet Union.

In September 1941 the deal was made and signed to organize a Polish Army in USSR. General Wladislaw Anders was chosen to be the Commander, of the 5<sup>th</sup> Division and Lt. Col. Zigmunt Berling Chief of Staff of the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. The 5<sup>th</sup> Division was organized in the vicinity of Krasnowodsk on the Volga River. Due to disagreement, Lt. Col. Zigmunt Berling decided not to leave the USSR when the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> Divisions left Uzbekistan USSR for Iran in the summer of 1942.

In September 1942, Lt. Col. Zigmunt Berling proposed to the leadership of the USSR the formation of military units from Poles still in slave labor camps of Siberia. In May 1943, Lt. Col. Berling was named Commander of the First Polish Infantry Division, Tadeusz Kosciuszko. In August 1943 he received the rank of a General. Five months later the First Division became a top notch Military Guard Division. He led the 1<sup>st</sup> Division in her maiden engagement with the German Army on October 12th 1943.

On July 22, 1944 he became the Cmdr. of all Polish Forces in Poland. In July and September 1944 he was Cmdr. of the First Army. Under his leadership the Polish Army crossed the Wisla River by the city of Demblin in Pulany.

This military operation had proven the heroism of the Polish soldiers when in August 1944 they had a bitter engagement on the left bank of the River Wisla in Magnuszew. Finally September 1944 we occupied the right bank Praga -Warszaska. General Berling on his own initiative sent troops on Aug. 16-23, 1944 over River Wisla to help the Polish underground forces battle the Germans in Warsaw. In the fall 1944 General Berling was relieved of his command as Army Cmdr. From 1944 -- 1947 he was sent to the General Staff Academy named K. Woroshylow I have no knowledge where that institution was located.

From 1947 - 1953 Gen. Berling was the Superintendent of the Military Staff Academy in Warsaw. In 1953, he was employed by the Forest Ministry as Vice President of the Agricultural Ministry. In 1963 on the 20th anniversary of the battle of Lenino, Zigmunt Berling received the rank of General of Arms. Among his military medals he received the highest one from the Polish and Russian Governments.

I have my own version of his dismissal from the Polish Armed Forces in Sept 1944. But both versions reach the same conclusions, namely that he was, and did try to help the Partisans and Home Army in Aug. 1944. He was a fine soldier as I pointed out in my book. I did meet him many times including at the Academy in 1943. He did not



consider himself higher than any other soldier. He demanded a lot from all soldiers more so from officers.

He always said that good training saves lives. He was very upset on our high losses during the Oct. 1943 operation. Partially he blamed the officers in charge for taking too many risks. I was very upset when he was relieved from his command. I did not know what had happened to him after his departure.

#### The non - commissioned battalion 1943

The non-commissioned battalion was organized after basic training about June 15th, 1943. Camp was primitive, no buildings, just huts. Very intensive training lasting 12 hours plus, from time to time night maneuvers. Yet, no one complained. As for staff, most were Polish. Schooling was very serious, but we accepted that. I knew that we had the responsibility as future leaders to take with us the best and pass it on to our soldiers, knowledge we acquired during this short but intensive training. We marched to the front as a unit following the Second Regiment.

Our battalion and the Division had the latest equipment that the Soviet soldier had our battalion was an Infantry Combat Unit for training of non-commissioned officers. Every cadet had the knowledge of every item used in our arsenal. Besides that we had specialties. In my case it was the 82 mm mortar with a 3 men team. Each one was responsible for their part. We took a lot of losses during operations due of being exposed to enemy fire.

I must say that we served in Russia in a country whose leadership was godless religion and was not legal, yet I, we, as Polish soldiers were not forbidden to practice religion and we did so every day on our own or as a group. Prayers were encouraged, a Priest Chaplain and a Rabbi were there to listen and give advice.

When the time came to go to war, they were in the forefront to counsel, Every Sunday during our stay in the Second Regiment, or in the Academy, a Catholic Mass was held in the open field by Father Chaplain Franciszek Kubsz who was in the Division from its beginning , and survived the war. Jewish soldiers had a young Rabbi Chaplain, Hershel Zawada. It was very sad to hear that the Jewish soldiers lost their Chaplain in the first encounter with the enemy, He came to the Division in June 1943, and fell in the battle for Lenino October 12<sup>th</sup> 1943.

At the same time we also had political leaders second in command. They were trained to sell their philosophy and describing in detail the bad situation in Poland, what we were doing there, the reason for our sacrifices we will make when the time comes, and also how grateful Poland should be to the USSR for giving us the opportunity and arms to take revenge on our common enemy and eventual liberation of our beloved land. All this took place after our regular daily routine.



My platoon leader was Cadet Sgt. Josef Kaminski, a Pole who rose after the war to become a General Superintendent of the Military Academy of the Polish Armed Forces. Everyone in the platoon admired him for his military knowledge. He knew how to get the best out of his soldiers and always with a smile and a joke. Company Commander was Lt. Kostanty Tarwid, Polish born in Russia and camp to the battalion from the Russian Army. He had good manners, was an excellent tactician, teacher and presenter.

Time moved on rapidly and our independent battalion together with the whole Division took the Oath on July 15th, 1943. Two months later we were on the front line, and continued until the end May 2nd, 1945 in Berlin.

Many soldiers and officers did not survive those two years to tell their story.



## GREETINGS SOLDIER!

The First Infantry was ethnically formulated the same as a U.S.S.R. Guard Division. The Division had the most up-to-date armament available at that time. The Polish Division had its own character and features, like uniforms, with Eagle buttons, caps with a Eagle at front, insignia, medals, and many other things. The important prayer occasions and holidays were observed. Cooperation between the Polish and Russian high Command was excellent.

The following names were the leaders and organizers at the beginning as I remember;

Commander - Lt. Col. Zigmunt Berling  
Second -in- Command - Col. Boleslaw Kieniewicz  
Education ( Political ) - Mjr. Wlodzimierz Sokorski  
Chief of Staff - Col. Anthony Swicki

Cmdr. 1<sup>st</sup> Artillery Regiment - Lt. Col. Leon Bukosemski  
Cmdr. 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment - Lt. Col. Wladislaw Kozino  
Cmdr. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment - Mjr. Gwidon Czerwinski  
Cmdr. 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment - Lt. Col. Tadeusz Piotrowski  
and others of lesser rank.

It was assumed that about 40-50 thousand would be mobilized in Spring 1944. Large numbers came from the Russian army in the beginning of 1943. As we know the U S S R occupied the Eastern part of Poland in 1939, and all young men were mobilized into the Red Army following the occupation, and all those who were unable to leave with General, Wladislaw Anders in the summer of 1942; among them were soldiers and officers with military expertise. Also, there were many ex soldiers in slave labor camps, some of them were children.

The First Division was only volunteer, one, in 1943, the rest of the Army was mobilized from Polish citizens. About half the soldiers and officers had previous military knowledge. On May 14, 1943 the first official order of the day was given by the Division Cmdr. Zigmund Berling. He said; (1) I took command of this military camp in Sielce, of the First Polish Infantry Division Tadeusz Kosciuszko. The fact is that during wartime we could not train on our own time schedule. In our case, it was only four (4) months. Our military camp training was interrupted on Aug. 26, 1943 when maneuvers were conducted by the whole Division and ended two days later.



Our military camp was located in the vicinity of Sielce - Divovo on the Oka River in Central Russia. The induction center was outdoors, interviews were conducted by a staff of 6 officers asking questions about our past, intellectual abilities, previous military experience, and about our patriotism and willingness to fight for Poland alongside the Russian Army. It was quite extensive.

Once you passed this interview process it was followed by medical examination, your belongings were left behind, except for shoes; there was a shortage of shoes. You received underwear and a temporary uniform, and your designation was decided by the commission. I was sent to the 2nd Infantry Regiment for training. The Division was lacking officer staff. Unfortunately, the Polish Army lost about 6000 professional officers in prisoner - of - war camps of Katyn Forest and other places between the years 1939 and 1943. The officers Academy was next to our camp under the leadership of Lt. Zygmunt Wilkin. It is necessary to understand that a lot of Polish officers and noncommissioned officers left with the 5th and 6th Division for Iran during the Summer of 1942.

Training began immediately. First, on the rifle range. Ground exercises began three weeks later. I, was assigned to an 82mm mortar company. I did well with the mortar and received one stripe on my shoulder, and was send to join the non-commissioned Academy. The daily routine at the Academy started at 6 AM with a regular short exercise lasting about 10 minutes, then run to the river for a quick wash, after that a roll call, followed by a marching song when the Northern early morning get-ups start. At 6:30 AM our daily prayers took place.

All bridges over the river Oka had been destroyed and heavily mined by the Germans. The front lines were very close to our camp. We were always in danger from air attack, therefore, most tactical exercises were conducted by night or in the forest. There were some air raids, but not to much damage was done.

Military training lasted all day, stopping only for lunch hour. Before dinner, special tactical and field exercises were conducted, and a political lesson took place in between. We did not pay much attention to that. Most officers at the Academy were Polish. The Academy consisted of one Battalion, divided into three Companies, and platoons. A mortar team consisted of a 3 man team attached to a platoon then to a company. Our team leader was a corporal by the name of Leuszniewicz. He was very professional and refused to take no for an answer. Each one of us had high respect for him, and slowly we became seasoned soldiers and future leaders in the field. Our platoon leader was First Lt. Cadet Josef Kaminski.

In later years, he advanced in rank to become A general-in-charge of the Military Academy of the Polish Army. In the beginning our battalion Cmdr, was a Mjr Ukolof Polish/Russian, but soon after a Polish Captain, Jan Lopacinski, took over the battalion, and under his leadership we marched to the front on Sept. 1st, 1943.



## FIRST POLISH DIVISION 1943

Four years after the German invasion of Poland on Sept, 1st, 1939, the First Polish Division named after a famous Polish Patriot, Tadeusz Kosciuszko got orders to leave its encampment at Sielce - Divivo and march to the front lines.

The most dangerous obstacles on this western front were in the vicinity of Witebsk, Orsza, Mohylen, and Smolensk, as well as the rivers; Oka, Ronie, Mierej and Dnieper. The Dnieper river was the widest and deepest river in Europe.

The commander of this central front for the USSR was Marshall, Wasily Sokolowski (1897-1968). The First Polish Division Tadeusz Kosciuszko was under the command of General, Zigmund Berling. In 1914 during WW I, Berling served as a platoon leader in the 2nd Regiment in the Polish Legion and fought against the Russians. Now, he is in command of the First Polish Division, having earlier served as the Chief of Staff for the 5th Division with the rank of Colonel, under the command of general Wladislaw Anders. They were together in the prisoner - of - war camp at Katyn Forest and other camps in the USSR,

Our opponent on the front line was German Group Center Army under command of Field Marshal Gunther Hans Von Kluge. The First Division was originally scheduled to be attached to the 21st and 33rd Armies on the northern line facing the Germans on the other side of the rivers Mierej and Pronie. The plan called for two Russian Armies, the 49th, and the 10th, to continue their attack in the direction of Mohylew and successfully securing the Southern military operation in the direction of Orsza.

Because of the changes made, the First Infantry Division, Tadeusz Kosciuszko, to which I was assigned, was attached to the 33rd Russian Army under the command of Col,General Wasily Gordow ( 1896 - 1951 ). But, the Polish Division had their objective assigned in the direction of the city Orsza. On Oct. 7th, 1943 I, found myself on the center of the front line facing the German Army Center.

The area terrain was full of swamps, wet lands, marshes, and muddy fields; especially difficult for the heavy artillery and tanks. the terrain favored the enemy. The territorial towns were Sukino - Lenino under the operation of the 33rd USSR Army. The German positions were on two heights, 215.5 and 217.6. At the same time, a half a kilometer wide valley of rivers Peniefka, Kropivka, Bagia, and Leszcza, all minor rivers to ford before the main obstacle, of the river Mierej, which I, and we had to



cross to get to our destination, Lenino and south of it. For the attack by the First Polish Division and the 42nd USSR Division from the 33rd Army to the north. The river Mierej had a natural footing to exit, or way out. The Germans were ready with hidden artillery and tanks. The enemy defense lines were 5, to 7, Kilometers in depth, well camouflage, disguised and protected from our artillery bombardment. West of the River Mierej were towns of Azorow, Sukino, Polsuhy, Trygubowa, and Puniszcze. The heights 215.5 and 217.6 a problem for the mechanized units and howitzer cannons.

The suburbs of Orsza were defended by the 4th, German Army under the command of Col. General Gottard Heynrici, part of Group Center. Group Center was under the command of Field Marshal Kluge. He was the defense organizer of the Group Center Front Line. The Fourth Army took part in the famous Kursk line and they were responsible for building the eastern wall on the River Dnieper in 1942 - 43 under the command of Gen. Robert Martinek of the 39th Corps with 5 divisions of Infantry, tanks, and anti - tank artillery.

The aim of the First Polish Division and the 33rd Army was to break through the 39th German Corps defenses and advance 5 kilometers from the towns of Sukino and Romanowo, and continue in the direction of the Dnieper River in the vicinity of Orsza on the western bank. The 33rd Army has been on the offensive from the second half of July 1943 to the middle of September 1943 with heavy losses in the process. The whole 33rd Army had only sixty percent of their soldiers which was some 40% less than the First Polish Division with its 12,500 soldiers in October 1943. On the left wing the 290th Division of the Russian Army with a total of 17,981 soldiers. This was far less than the actual 24,000 men of two Russian Divisions.

The D-day for the break through attack was October 10, 1943 under command of General W. Gordow who had charge of the assignment for the crossing of the River Dnieper. He undertook extensive and brisk preparations. First his main trust will be to use his two experienced Russian Divisions the 42nd the 290th and the first Polish Division plus the 9th Artillery Regiment, the latter mainly to break the first enemy positions with the hope that this will dislodge them. This would give him the opportunity to throw in the 2nd and 3rd Fast Mechanized Cavalry Corps. In this way, the two Army Corps would act as a group of fast moving units for a surprise attack which would enable them to open the road for seven infantry divisions. These would cross the River Dnieper and eventually achieve a beachhead on the right bank of the river.

At 0012 military time on October 8th, 1943, the Division Commander gave detailed order for the operations to all units involved in the upcoming battle: We urge the first designated units for this operation to fulfill their assignment in the first stage of this attack.

( 1 ) The 42nd Infantry Division under the command of Maj. Gen. N.N. Multana, Supported by two light artillery regiments, one anti - tank artillery regiment, one mortar regiment, and a brigade of mortar artillery to break through the enemy positions in the



vicinity of Sukino to Polsuhy and continue attacking in the direction of Chalesewki, and Majoresky.

Ø (2) On your right will be the First Polish Infantry Division and on your left the 290th Infantry Division under the command of Maj.Gen. Iwan Gasparian. The Center will be supported by 3 light artillery regiments, one mortar regiment, one mortar brigade, two anti-tank artillery regiments. Your assignment is to break through the enemy defenses of the 215.5 heights in the vicinity of Lenino. The attack will have many obstacles marked by small rivers and towns of Moracewka, Mirakowka, and Sidorowka.

(3) The First Polish Division under the command of Gen. Zigmund Berling in concert with Gen. Gordowa had agreed to push their attacks in the Center line flanked by the 42nd and 290th USSR Division in the main direction with its neighbors on the right and left.

Gen. Zigmund Berling received a special order from the high command. He agreed that the First Polish Division would have the support of the tank regiment plus 2 light artillery regiments , one mortar regiment, and a battalion of combat engineers plus the 67th Howitzer Regiment from the 33rd USSR Army.

Our first movement was to break the enemy defenses two kilometers from the town of Polzuchy to the 215.5 heights and press the offensive into the western direction, gain access to the Pniewka River, and continue to the towns of Losiewka and Churilow. On the way to accomplish the objective, the assignment given to the First Polish Division Commander included three strong points from the enemy, the town of Polzuchy, height 215.5, and height 217.6. These were the plans and orders for the eventual joint attack on October 12,1943. The general concept for the military operation was worked out by General Berling and his staff by examining the strength-of the German defenses, the strength of our three infantry regiments;

First Regiment under the command of Lt. Col. Franciszek Derksa,  
2nd Regiment under the command of Col. Gwidon Czerwinski,  
3rd Regiment under the command of Lt.Col. Tadeusz Piotrowski,  
and to continue the attack the 3rd Regiment. The tank unit would start the operation with support by the 20 Armored Vehicles, Artillery regiments, and continue the attack in the westerly direction as fast as possible to reach the River Pniewka about 17 kilometers from the German defense lines. The artillery was given the task to continue their attack with tactical fire to break the enemy defenses.

To support the infantry and tanks, a 90mm artillery creeping barrage was to begin at 1 1/2 km. and advance a 100 meters to allow the advancing infantry and tanks to safely move up in coordination with the front line commanders and the mine sweepers. The Kosciuszko Division was in position with its follow-up units ready for the maiden enemy engagement on October 12, 1943.



Our Division comprised the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, Infantry Regiments, one Light Artillery, one Medium Tank Regiment, one Division of Anti - Tank Artillery, one Non - Commissioned Academy unit that consisted of about 350 soldiers And officers of which I was a member , one Woman Company, one Diagnostic Company, one Army Engineering Battalion, one Engineers Company, One Gun smith Company one Communication Company, one Chemical Company, one Penal Company, and one Battalion of Nurses and Doctors and other support staff. The total First Division personnel on October 11th 1943 including The Tank Regiment, was 12,400 soldiers, 920 non-commissioned officers, and 1,000 officers reflecting a shortage of about 100 officers. The Division would suffer for this shortage.

On October 11th, 1943 at 11PM, the enemy started to broadcast in Polish, playing polish music, and urging soldiers to come over to their ranks and fight the communists in the USSR. Our artillery answered with a barrage of brutal fire. Our Regiment Artillery Commanders were Col.Wojciech Bewziuk and Major A. Frankowski.

Between the hours of 11 AM and 2 PM, before the frontal attack, the 2nd, Infantry Regiments main enemy opposition was in the town of Polzuchy. The German's second defense line had been specially designed, similar to the Trygubon position. It therefore required assistance from two other regiments during the operation on Polzuchy. The main thrust was expected from the units of the 42nd USSR Division which was positioned in the center to take hill 217.6. The First Division was on the left wing in the region of Trygubow, and the main runt fell on the 2nd Polish Regiment into which I was inducted during May 1943. General Zigmunt Berling, the Commander of the First Division, took into consideration the cooperation between regiments in the area. Lt.Col. Czerwinski, Colonel, Galicki, and Lt.Col.Sokorski from the 1st Regiment, with Capt.Stawinskis of the First Battalion of the 2nd Regiment successfully dislodged the enemy from the first defense line. The second company then took over the heights of an unnamed position.

When the first group of the advancing Division found itself near the town of Polzuchy, the enemy launched a vicious counterattack on the left and right wings of the advancing 2nd Regiment. The German infantry moved forward with their hands held up to trick the Polish units. polish soldiers opened fire and a dramatic scene developed lasting a long time. Reinforcements reached the battlefield, but the two Battalions involved in the fighting were running short of ammunition.

The first Battalion took over better positions and continue to attack in the direction of Polzuchy under the command of Lt.Col. Czerwinski. He assessed the situation and made the decision to move forward in a westerly direction.

Lt. Jakimionka of the 2nd Battalion proceeded to Polzuchy from the east and Captain Karpowitz of the 3rd battalion attacked from the south to keep the enemy of balance two more units under the leadership of Lt. Marian Buguslawski and Lt. Tadeusz Tomas were also advancing in the direction of Polzuchy.



Suddenly, the enemy was retreating to the east. One of our units advanced to a small house which was in flames. At the same time, my old infantry company from the First Battalion of the Second Regiment, continue their attack from the south. At this point, the enemy decided to counterattack with machine guns, and artillery fire on the 2nd Regiments right wing. LT. Jakimioneck held his positions, organized his soldiers for a temporary retreat, and then counterattacked the enemy advanced and joined up with the USSR 459 Regiment. . . At 2 PM, Polzuchy was in Polish hands but only after bitter losses in hand to hand fighting...15 officers in lead positions lost their lives. . . + \*

In the center of the attacking forces, the 2nd Regiment was over extended. A strong counterattack by the German forces with tanks, artillery, and air force attacked our positions. The whole 33rd Russian Army became involved. The combined efforts of all the participating groups continued the attack on the German lines, but the enemy continued to slowly press forward. . .



The First Polish Division - October 14th, 1943

For What We Fought -- And Against Whom

Commander of the Western Front.. In it he said that the Polish Division, Tadeusz Kosciuszko and its First Tank Regiment achieved success in breaking the defense line in the city of Lenino, surging ahead and in the process they took 300 soldiers and 13 officers as prisoners of war. Despite murderous artillery shelling, dive - bombing, and use of Ferdinand Tanks, the Germans did not achieve success. All enemy counterattacks were repulsed by the Polish artillery and infantry, while the enemy suffered large losses in these attacks. Polish units under cover of darkness occupied German positions, and blew up a command post while retrieving important documents and maps.

The USSR General Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Sergiej Sztemienko Said: once again the General Staff during the war years has written about the 33rd Army operation on the Western USSR Front in 1943 where supporting operations by the First Polish Division was positioned before a new enemy defense line in the foreground of the Dnieper River.

In order to break the enemy defenses, the front line had for armament a combination of 206 mortars and artillery pieces for one kilometer of front line facing an enemy with 52 tanks for each kilometer on the northern side of Lenino. The 33rd, Army had at her disposal for the first operation three divisions, the First Polish in the center, on the right flank was the 42nd USSR Division and on the left flank was the 290th USSR Division. The USSR Divisions were purposely assigned to the right and left flanks because they had the most experience. The plan was for the 42nd Division to move forward and occupy hill 217.6, the 290th Division could not advance due to muddy territory with streams intersecting over all routes, the First Polish Division was assigned to occupy the important tactical height 215.5 and break out with the support of both flanks.

The success of the three Divisions depended upon coordination of all three partners . Unfortunately, the plan did not work as anticipated. Hill 217.6 was not taken consequent upon heavy enemy fire. The 290th Division had little success against the Germans and occupied the small hamlet of Trygubon. A strong counterattack by the enemy forced the 290th to withdraw from its captured positions. However, the First Polish Division pressing ahead was most successful. We occupied enemy positions to the depth of 4 kilometers. It proved an important and tactical success against the strong



German Army of the Center. From that day on, the Polish Army in World War II never retreated. The last historic event when Polish soldiers set foot on this part of Russian soil was in 1600, some three and a half centuries earlier!

### Ø For What We Fought - - And Against Whom Ø

First Battalion, Mortar Company 82 mm. After some three or more weeks, I was promoted to sergeant. Indeed, I lost many of my comrades in those engagements on some of the most difficult territory in Europe. Those positions were not relinquished, until June 1944. The question arises, was it worth it? Yes, to free the innocent people from the Nazi occupation.

The losses on both sites were enormous. The First Division alone in 2 1/2 days of bitter fighting without stoppage dealt the enemy high losses according to the official statistics. The enemy losses of 1478 dead enemy soldiers including 9 officers and 83 noncommissioned officers, as well as 72 machine guns, 42 artillery pieces with mortars, two tanks, and five planes. But of more importance was the transfer of initiative to our forces. In ensuing months, the German Army sustained the greatest losses in its history, later known by the operational code name "Begration."

In combat, attacking forces always sustain heavier losses. The First Infantry Div. casualties were 3054 soldiers, among them 168 officers 603 non-commissioned officers that represented 24.5% of the Division! Of these, 510 lost their lives, among them 51 officers, and 216 non-commissioned officers, with 1776 injured, among them 100 officers, 346 non - commissioned officers, 116 soldiers were taken prisoner. The First and Second Regiments took the largest losses, about 1600 of the First Regiment and the 2nd Regiment over 900. Officers , and non - commissioned sustained very heavy losses, the reason being that our leaders had to be front line soldiers , setting example to follow. Many of them I knew especially from the second Regiment.

For five days, the 33rd Russian Army lost manpower in the same proportion on the same front from Oct 12 - 18, 1943; some 1700 soldiers died, 3300 wounded, combined losses were 2210 dead, 5844 wounded.. In comparison to the time in other engagements, these were indeed horrendous losses, mainly from the nature of the territory and the obstacles involved. My old 2nd Infantry regiment lost over 900 soldiers and officers. just think about it for a moment...

On October 14th, 1943 gen. Zigmunt Berling issued a proclamation to all soldiers of the First Division: Soldiers ! During the two bloody days of bitter fighting against an enemy well entrenched across the River Merej, you have shown the love for your country, your purpose for being here, and the road ahead. You have seen the devastation and losses. The assignment the First Division received was to break the front line at Lenino. You have proved that Poland is alive and yearning to be free and willing to fight for her victory. I have never forgotten his address to us.



## For What We Fought - And Against Whom

The Commander of the USSR 33rd Army Gen. Gordon wrote an account of the First Division on October 22nd, 1943 to the battle fought by the First Infantry Division, the Tadeusz Kosciuszko, October 1943 on the River Merej, USSR, went into the history of World War II, as the beginning of the liberation of the Polish nation. It started with the battle at Lenino, USSR, on October 12th, 1943 together with the 33rd Russian Army in the Orsza-region of White Russia. The military operation on the western - German front named it the Panter Line, description ambiguous in comprehension as to definite military substance and content. The campaign was operationally code named Bagration after a prince in Tolstoys novel War & Peace.

Our opposition was German Army Group Center under the command of Field Marshal Gunter Hans Von Kluge. The German 4th Army of the Kursk Line attached to the defense of the Orsza on the outskirts of the Dnieper River, the most important part of the German eastern bank of the Dnieper River, a natural defense line against a Russian engagement over the widest European River. The Germans had strong fortifications guarding all accesses over the river and were ready with infantry, tanks, and air force. This same air force took part in fall of 1943 fight trying to prevent our advances. On this line, the Germans had more planes than Russians. For instance, after 7 days the 33rd Army actually stopped to exist, so heavy was the German air bombardment. The same phenomenon happened to its replacement, the 21st Army.

The defenses on the Orsza Line held up our advance on this front line. The nature of this territory favored the German defense line. But in retrospect, the Germans committed a strategic blunder by maintaining an enormous amount of manpower on this western line. For, we were able to cross the Dnieper River on another sector and force the enemy army to withdraw in order to avoid encirclement. The fact is that our First Division took part in this most obstinate operation during the fall of 1943 on the Russian German Front.

During the two day engagement by the First polish Infantry Division, in which I took part in the vicinity of Lenino, we were able to cross over the large mud valley of the River Merej, cross over and break the German defenses to the depth of two kilometers up to the town of Polzuchy-Lenino. We advanced 4 km deep, breaking through the main defense line of the 688th Nazi Infantry Regiment and inflicting heavy losses. We engaged and held the position, resisting the enemy in the town of Polzuchy and its tactical position 215.5 height, and stopping the enemy from opening up another defensive point. Our success in holding the enemy in check allowed the other participants to engage the enemy at other parts of the line.



## For What We Fought - And Against Whom

I must stress that the Second Infantry Regiment was in my heart. I had personal friends there, from the Siberian Labor Camp. I was inducted into it in May 1943, sent to the Non - Commissioned Academy in June 1943.

### The Day Of My Induction Into The Non - Commissioned Officers Academy

I will never forget the moment of my induction and the oath taking ceremony as a cadet in the non - commissioned officers Academy. I was very proud to have been selected for it, even though it was very difficult for me, and the other cadets due to strenuous field conditions with long hours, and not enough food for growing bodies. It proved hard to come to grips with the losses of my young comrades and schoolmates in the first military operation of October 12th 1943 from which I had just returned. After my discharge from the field hospital in late November 1943, I was posted to the First Artillery Regiment assigned to 122 millimeter howitzer battery with the responsibility of Cannon Number One for the duration of the war, which ended for me on the May 2nd 2 AM, 1945 in the vicinity of Alexander Platz in Berlin-Germany. But my introduction to infantry combat with the 82 millimeter mortar Company at Lenino never left me.

In the First Polish Division, there was a very popular man of God, a priest, Msg. Wilhelm Franciszek Kubsz. In the battle at Lenino, he walked together with the soldiers carrying his cross in his hands onto the field of battle. Fighting our common enemy was nothing new to this priest. Earlier, he had been hunted by the Germans in Poland but escaped to the forest and joined a partisan group named Uncle Wasia where he practiced dentistry as well performing his chaplain duties.

I first met him when inducted into the army and taking my soldiers oath of service back on July 15th, 1943. Despite having been wounded several times in the course of his service, Msg, Kubsz survived the war and later received the Cross for Bravery and Gallantry in the Field of Glory for his service during the battle of Lenino, for which I am very proud of him. We also had in our ranks a rabbi soldier chaplain, Hersch Zawada. He lost his life in October 12th 1943 battle for Lenino along with many soldiers and their officers.



CITY OF ORANIENBURG, GERMANY

CONCENTRATION CAMP SACHSENHAUSEN, APRIL 19, 1945

April 19, 1945 we occupied this modern city of about 25,000 after bitter fighting with heavy losses to this point, when I, with my battery entered a large facility, assuming it to be a large manufacturing complex. To my dismay turnout to be a Concentration Camp Sachsenhausen is located just about 50 km from the German Capital Berlin, and the Nazi Headquarters the Reichstag where all the planning and implementing of the destruction of human lives began, that resulted of about fifty Five Million people loosing their lives.

For the first time I was involved in liberating human beings alive, in a Concentration Camp even though barely so.

My estimation came to about 2,000, majority of them were women from all over Europe, and in deplorable condition, afraid, incoherent, crying uncontrollably. Having had knowledge of four languages, I was able to communicate with them. According to their testimony, some of them were there a long time with having been transported and marched on foot from Poland in the last months of the War.

We stabilized the situation as best we could, gave inmates all the food and water, assured them of their safety inspected the facility until the administrative unit took it over, and my Battery returned to the front line positions, hoping and praying that I, and the rest of my men will survive and remember what we had seen in this horrible place, the Concentration camp Sachsenhausen.

What I have seen there was; Crematories, specially erected hooks on the walls, and posts with human bodies still on them in full view. A special shooting gallery where victims were laying dead and full of blood. I, also saw a complete manufacturing plants intact, producing all kinds of parts for the war industry, making uniforms for the German army, hundreds of pure white rabbits fat & groomed and people starving to death. These sights are still with me to this day.

Hundreds of thousands of people from all over Europe, including Germany lost their lives there, among them Gentiles, Jews, Gypsies, Homosexuals, Jehovah Witnesses, and prisoners of war. They were brought from all over the occupied countries, worked till they could no longer to do so, and then send to the Crematories.

There were strict orders not to harm any prisoners of war in our hands. I had interrogate civilians living on the outside, and they insisted of knowing absolutely



nothing of what was going on behind the walls of Sachsenhausen. The people of Oranienburg were high class educated people, they had seen daily transport arriving and none of them leaving that dreadful place. You don't have to be a genius to figure out where the people went. Our soldiers apprehended two S.S. officers who were hiding, and short time later they were gone. You have to understand when in situation I, described, things will go out of control, and there is nothing any one can do...

There is another factor to that. While we were advancing, soldiers tried to compose them selves. Each of us new then that the end was nearing, but it was not insight. Sachsenhausen, was only 50 km from Berlin, and people were still murdered there, the same day, we entered this camp. This camp was left to the administrative unit, and I, moved on in the direction of Berlin, just 50 km, South from Oranienburg. That was the last time I had seen Sachsenhausen.

After the war I came across a few people who were inmates of Sachsenhausen, one of them from this area, who survived with his older brother. He is from Poland, taken to Auschwitz at the age of 8, held there until January 1945, send out on the death march to Sachsenhausen until March 1945, from there to Bergen - Belsen, finally liberated by the British troupes in April 1945. His Brother died just days before the liberation.

Oranienburg is a suburb of Berlin, and yet this city was almost intact. To this day I cannot comprehend why nothing had been done to disturb the regular supply of people send there for destruction....

Recollections from April 1945...



MEMORIES FROM AUGUST 1944  
As I remember them August 1st, 1994

This is my own account, and not any political view, or statement, because I was a front line soldier serving in the First Polish Division, and my only objective was to free Poland and its population from the Nazi occupation, and get reunited with my family which I had not seen since September 3rd, 1939.

Let me retract to the beginning of February 1944 somewhere on the front line positions in White Russia, USSR. As I, recall the winter that year was very brutal with enormous snow fall, bitter cold wind. Our roads had to be open, and maintained 24 hours a day with shifts from each outfit clear them manually with wide wooden shovels, at the same time keep the enemy of guard with study bombardment. As I remember at the end of March 1944 slow moving progress and heavy losses discovering on the way enormous atrocities committed on the civilian population of White Russia. As a front line soldier your objective is to get to your assigned destination, with one think in mind, trust ahead and stay alive, concentrate and remember what you had seen.

And after three months of agony and sadness I have reached the pre - 1939 Polish borders. On September 27, 1939 Poland lost the war to Germany and Russia and Poland was divided once more by the occupying powers. Soviet Union inexact the western part of the Ukraine and western White Russia and the rest Nazi Germany. Historically each time Poland lost its wars Poland was carved up by the invading forces. When World War Two ended, the Soviet Union had no intention of giving back this territory to Poland, instead she divided Germany from Upper Sielesia, and Lower, East And West Prussia - or Pomeria all the way to the Baltic Sea from Gdansk - Kolberg - to Szczecin, naming it the Nice - Oder - Line which in actuality is much larger and richer in raw material and farm land.

Now, Poland is a free and Democratic Country, but animosities are continued by the Poles from with in and aboard, instead get going its economy and its future. In 1944 there were about 3000 Jews, but some poles think that there are Three and half million of them. So the bitter conflict between the Russia, White Russia and Ukraine will continue.

I will continue with the military operations as I remember from the early part of summer 1944. After bitter fighting with the enemy by my regiment and the rest of the Division, we successfully crossed a major obstacle river Bug with enormous casualties. The enemy had hoped to hold their positions on the opposite site of the river, and we had no choice but to pursue the enemy. Our main objective s were to occupy a large city of this region and its capital City Lublin, known to the Jews throughout the world as the Cradle of Jewish learning. As I mentioned in previous pages in liberating the two



Extermination Camps in this area Sobibor and Majdanek on July 22, and July 23 1944 Majdanek was the very first camp fully operational liberated by our forces.

I had occupied Lublin July 23, 1944. From that day on we continued liberating towns, cities and villages and people in them inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. As I recall my battery reached the outskirts of Warsaw at the end of July or beginning of August on the West Bank of River Wisla, with bitter resistance by the enemy. My Lt. suffered multiple shrapnel wounds, one of my men lost a leg, my protective shield was heavily damaged, but the vital instruments and my head were OK. My battery had no fatalities thank God. There were so many dead soldiers that each unit had to help to dispose of the bodies. Indeed a very painful task to perform to avoid all kinds of epidemics during the heat of August.

While the liberation of Poland continues, we had received a cool warm reception from the local population. After stationing on the West Bank in City Praga Warszawska through Christmas, I had the privilege to meet local people and to try to find out why this cold shoulder from the locals. I also came across one Jewish family of three who survived the Warsaw Ghetto and were living in the area. They blamed the outcome of the Ghetto uprising mostly on the people outside the Ghetto walls and on the most active and well organized resistance group in Poland the A.K. Armia Krajowa - Home Army. Unfortunately Jews were not admitted in their ranks except in few instances of not being recognized as Jews. If the same group of leaders would have given a helping hand to the Jewish resistance in the ghetto and elsewhere Hitler would have never succeeded in Poland with the Final Solution. The sad story is that many of the Jewish resistance fighters accosted in the forest by members of the A.K. lost their lives on the spot. It is very hard to come to grips with this, especially when both groups were hunted by the Germans. Those stories were told me by the surviving family, and by a honest Christian in Oct. 1944.

For me, it is very painful to write about the injustices on our people, because as a child, later as teen I had no problem growing up in Poland, nor did I have any problem in the military. I can not accuse every Pole for doing wrong during the war, because there were many who assisted some Jewish families and Ghetto fighters. In my opinion, if the help from the AK could have been provided to the Jewish fighter and cooperation between both groups, the outcome of the general uprising of August 2nd 1944 in my opinion would have succeeded, and the relations between those two great religions would have had a new beginning and understanding.

The Home Army accused the Polish Arm Forces fighting on the Eastern front as being communists, at the same time the same Polish soldiers who served on the western Front as the good guys and real Poles, not saying or mentioning that both groups were interned in Siberian labor camps not by their own choice, and in many cases due to sudden exit, families were split and never reunited again that is the sad and tragic part of the war.

When the Polish Army began organizing in the USSR 1941-42, all of us released after USSR, United States and Britain entered into a agreement soon after declaration of



War against the USSR by the Germans in June 22,1941. There were about Two Million Poles In Camps among them about 125,000 Polish Jews. In the late Summer of 1941, it was decided by the Polish Exiles in London to form a polish military force in the USSR, and to fight the Nazis on both fronts, starting with the Eastern Front. The War situation looked very grim for the Russians in 1941. This agreement was signed between Gen. Wladislaw Sikorski and Josef Stalin, with the agreement of Churchill & Roosevelt.

In Russia Gen. Wladislaw Anders was in charge of the Two Divisions the 5th and the 6th Infantry division near City Saratov on the Volga River some 200 miles from Stalingrad. Gen Wladislaw Anders was one of the high officers who survived the Katin massacre of thousands Polish officers P.O.W. by the USSR near Smolensk.

Polish people, including myself descended from all over to enlist and join the Army, but first we had to get some food to get on our feet. None of us was ready for military training and the process was very slow. The time table was set, but Gen.

Anders could not deliver his troops on time and he arrived to the conclusion that one division will not do the job right, and there were just to many Poles in the camp to be processed. By the time I have reached this area, the Army had moved to Central Asia near Tashkent, town of Yan-Givul.

Except for military, there were no passenger trains available, no provisions, and no accommodations provided, you were on your own, and knowing nothing about this strange country I simply followed the crowd and finding thinks along the way. Meanwhile by the Spring 1942, over 70,000 soldiers and families left the U.S.S.R for Iran, by the Summer over 40,000 had left, none was assigned to the Eastern front. Among them who left was the late Prime Minister of Israel Menachem Begin. I was by then accepted, but Stalin put a stop to it, because none of the recruits reached the Eastern Front. It was estimated that about 110 or - 140,000 departed, and about 1,860,000 were left behind at the mercy of the Soviets, and no future insight.

Among who did not want to leave his people behind was Col. Zigmund Berling he was the Chief of Staff of the 5th Division, a professional soldier, who together with Gen. Anders spend time at POW camp in Katin, and saved from the 1940 tragedy.



## EVENTS between July 27, 1994 and July 30, 1994

On July 27, 1994 at about 11:50 AM telephone rang in my home and the party on the line asked to speak to me, introducing herself as Miss Amy Zissok from the Presidential Office.

After this short introduction she requested from me a short biography, and if possible to be faxed to the White House in C/O Amy Zissok, Washington, DC 20050. Momentarily I was in shock and almost put the receiver down, then I ask her is this some kind of a joke? she insisted that is not, but that is of outmost importance. Finally I agreed to send the Bio, after I finish typing it. I ask her for what purpose this bio is? She replied it is very important. I, assured Miss Zissok that it will be faxed the next day. This story was conformed the same night when I called the guest Curator at the National Museum of American Jewish Military History in Washington DC Mr. Morton Horvitz. We talk for a while I told him what had transpired during the day, but he did not know when the trip to Poland will take place. At 10 PM, that day I received A call from the Past National Commander Mr. Warren Dolny congratulating me on my selection to represent the Jewish War Veterans, but he to did not know when that trip will take place. The next few days I continued with our Vacation plans to leave on Friday July 29, 1994 10:30 AM destination Cape May, arriving that Friday about 3:30 PM. At 8 PM that day I received phone call from Miss Weiskoff, saying that she is calling from the Presidential office in reference to the trip to Poland with the Vice President Al Gore, on Saturday July 30, 9 PM from Washington, DC. Miss Weiskoff was very apologetic and sincere telling me that I was included in the Vice Presidential Party, for the 50th Anniversary of the General Uprising of August 1st 1944, in Warsaw, Poland. We talk for a long time and apologizing over and over. I replied that if I would had received a call before my departure, or if I would have been worn about the date, all my plans would have been changed. It would have been a great honor to be with the Vice President Al Gore, and to represent the United States, and the Jewish War Veteran of the USA.

I repeated to her once more that it would be impossible to drive back to Rockland and be back in Washington for the 9 PM departure. I was locking forward to that trip. It would had been my first return to Country of my birth, since I left it in spring 1946 and pay respect to all who perished in that dreadful war, including my entire family friends and schoolmates, and pay respect to all soldiers who did not returned home.

Miss Weiskoff apologized once more for the missed communication and we bid sadly good boys. And so it goes in Washington, to many hands, and one does not know, what the other is doing.

As it turn out, Vice President Al Gore attended the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw uprising on August 1st 1944, by the Home Army, known in Poland as the Armia - Krajowa.

The same group that refused Jewish fighters in their ranks, except for the one of not reviling of being Jewish. The same group who refused help to the Jewish Uprising in



the Warsau Ghetto in April 1943. The same group who murdered many Jewish Partisans in the Polish Forests by disarming them first.

The same group who murdered Six Concentration Camp Survivors in late May of 1945, in the City of Lublin, where Extermination Camp Maidanek is located. The same group who murdered in cold blood one of my soldiers, a devoted Catholic, an prisoner of war by the Russians who prayed twice daily ,who each day put his live on the line , as a front line telephone linemen who received his first pass in June 1945 to see his parents for the first time since 1939, His only crime was being a Polish volunteer soldier on the on the Eastern Front, and wearing a Polish Uniform. Such was the mentality of some Poles, and what chances did a Jew had to survive the War in Poland. ??? Very, very sad indeed....

Nevertheless these statements are my own, and in no shape or form would I had dishonored this Salem ceremony.

I believe in forgiveness, I am here not to judge, Each one of us will be judge when time comes.

Yes, I am disappointed that mistake like that occurred. Just a simple warning should have been given to each representative to report to the White House if a vacation is planed. There were so many people involved that it is hard to put finger on at any individual.

I would hope that in the future this episode will be remembered, and the White House with all its staff will shape up, and take care of their responsibility.

P.S. I, received a letter of apology, with explanation from Vice President Al Gore on the Sept, 22 1994.



## MEMORIES OF A POLISH SOLDIER ON THE EASTERN FRONT DURING =WORLD WAR II=

My induction into the Polish army of the 2<sup>nd</sup> infantry regiment of all volunteer First Polish Division, named Tadeusz Kosciuszko took place in May 1943. The following memories are my remembrances and reflections of those events some sixty years later.

Upon arrival at the Non – Commissioned Academy in June 1943, we received the good news of the delivery of many Jeeps and a dozen “Studebaker trucks” to equip our First Artillery Regiment. Accompanying this shipment were all manner of canned goods, including the famous canned ‘Spam’. We received a constant flow of trucks and jeeps from that day on. Up to that point, all light artillery like the 45 mm and 75 mm were pulled by a team of six horses. By the time we left our encampment three months later on September 1<sup>st</sup> 1943, our artillery was mechanized with the exception of the 45mm anti-tank guns which were still pulled by a team of horses. These kept pace with the infantry who still walked for hundreds of miles. A year later, even the soldiers of the reserve Infantry were rolling on wheels made in U.S.A.

While still in training at the non-commissioned academy in Sielc-Divovo on the Oka River in the vicinity of Smolensk with frontline only 65 miles away in Central Russia, we received a tragic news of the death of General Wladislaw Sikorski. At the time of his death, Gen. Sikorski was the Commander and Chief of the Armed Forces as well as Premier of the Polish Government in exile, in London, England. The circumstances surrounding this event as reported to us were as follow:

“On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1943,” exactly 23:09 hours the plane carrying General Sikorski from London crashed seconds after takeoff. Accompanying him on the plane was his daughter, his Chief of Staff General Tadeusz Klimecki, and sixteen (16) other high ranking members of the Polish Armed Forces and Government in exile. All had perished. British divers retrieved the bodies for formal burial within days.

All Polish patriots knew the story of Gen. Sikorski, who had a brilliant military career dating back to 1920, when Poland reestablished its nationhood following World War I and the treaty of Versaille. The Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, delivered a special eulogy in memory of Gen Sikorski in Parliament on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1943. He praised him as one of the finest Generals of the times. “Let us Remember,” he said, gen. Sikorski was ably to save a large part of the Polish Army after the 1939 conquest of Germany and negotiating with Rumania to open its borders to the Polish soldiers, government officials, as well as safe keeping for some of our national treasures. From Rumania, the Army was evacuated to France and took part in the defense of that country against the German Army a few months later.

“With the fall of France in 1940, Gen. Sikorski evacuated his soldiers to Britain, organized the Polish Armed Forces on land, sea, and air. Polish soldiers, sailors, and



## MEMORIES OF A POLISH SOLDIER ON THE EASTERN FRONT DURING =WORLD WAR II=

airmen fought side by side with the Allies for one and only one purpose, to defeat the Nazi regime of Germany and free the population of the occupied countries."

Following the June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1941 German invasion of the Soviet Union, General Sikorski proved instrumental in negotiating with Josef Stalin, the head of the USSR, for the freedom of all Polish citizens interned in the Siberian Slave Labor Camps, after the Soviet invasion of Poland in September 17<sup>th</sup> 1939, and the release of Polish POW's, both officers and soldiers. I was one such prisoner, as was my future wife Ruth.

General Sikorski worked diligently for the release of all Poles and sought the formation of the Polish Armed Forces integrated into the Russian Army, but with its own national identity. It came to fruition in the late 1941.

A minute of silence was observed for six days beginning on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 1943. The memory of this event lasts with me to this day and will remain for years to come in the Polish history books.

There were rumors after the death of Gen. Sikorski. Foul play was mentioned, but there was no evidence to show foul play. World War II began in Poland and the partitioning of that land with Russia. Russia in turn was invaded by Germany two years later on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1941. As a consequence, the Russians granted amnesty in the fall of that year to all imprisoned Polish people. We knew that many Polish officers failed to return from their prison camps when General Wladislaw Anders organized the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> infantry divisions as requested by the Russians in 1941 and 1942.

None of the imprisoned Officers in the "Katin Forests" in the vicinity of Smolesk, reported to the two divisions. Both Generals Anders and Sikorski pursued the complaints, having personally known high ranking officers held in Russia after their invasion of Poland in 1939. From that day on, the accusations of our Generals and the denials of the Soviet Union created irreconcilable differences between ourselves and the Soviet Union.

The full truth came out slowly, beginning with the Soviet Dictator Stalin's death in 1953, and the passage of almost forty years following the collapse of Communism in Russia. Mikhail Gorbachev, the last Soviet Premier, opened the KBG files of the Six to Eight Thousand (6-8000) polish officers missing during their version of the secret police, the NKVD, headed by Lavrenty Beria.

As early as the winter of 1939 he had ordered the execution of all officers held in the three prison camps among them some 700 Jewish doctors, lawyers, and educators called up for duty just prior to the 1939 invasion of Poland.



## MEMORIES OF A POLISH SOLDIER ON THE EASTERN FRONT DURING =WORLD WAR II=

Myself and over 2.000.000 other Polish internees were eternally grateful to General Sikorski for his vision of Poland and his passion for her people. Because of him, all polish citizens imprisoned in Russia were released, given passes and free to go where it was safe at that time in Russia. Like myself, many chose to enlist to the Polish Army. Unlike myself, majority of them did not see the end of the war. At the time I was excepted, the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Divisions commanded by Gen. Anders had already departed for Persia (Iran) and from there to Britain.

One of many soldiers in my unit, who earlier served under Gen. Sikorski in the 1920's was my fathers age. He was forty six years old and volunteered to serve for his country, and Thank God he survived, and so did his son.

At the same time in Kursk vicinity USSR the greatest tank battle of World War II began to develop. On the 7<sup>th</sup> July 1943, just one week before my swearing ceremony, and the same day Gen Sikorski's body was returned for burial in England by the Polish Navy, thirteen attacks by the Germans were repulsed by the Russian Artillery and infantry. Similar activity's took place in the next two days with the same result. The buildup continued on both sites with thousands of tanks, artillery and soldiers on each side.

One of the soldiers on duty when these events began was 20 year old Polish sailor named Lutek Pulsakowski. He had lost his father during the German invasion of Poland in 1939. His hometown of Brest-on the Bug river fell under the Russian occupation. At the age of 17, along with his mother and two brothers he was transported by the NKVD, (the secret police) to Siberia in April, 1940.

It was a sentence unlike my own, except that he had his family with him, and that I was deported in May 1940, from the city Lwow. With the invasion of the USSR by Germany, and the release of Polish citizens and prisoner of war from the slave labor camps, the Pulsakowski family of three boys and their mother journeyed to Samarkand, in Central Asia, the Uzbekistan Republik, seeking the Polish Army under the Command of Gen. Wladislaw Anders. The 20 year old Lutek decided to join the Army immediately and was accepted into the 6<sup>th</sup> Polish Infantry Division, while the 5<sup>th</sup> Division left in June 1942 for Persia (Iran) and then to Britain.

The evacuation of refugees from the war fronts in the White Russia and Ukraine into central Asia created conditions of death, starvation and disease from lack of food, housing and medical facilities. I was very lucky for choosing to work on a farm, even so that I had not seen a loaf bread during my entire stay in Central Asia. It was my decision to return back to Central Russia as soon as was possible. Like myself, these refugees traveled back north to find temporary housing and jobs. From word of mouth, nothing was circulated in print, I heard of formation of the First Polish Infantry Division taking place just outside Moscow near Smolensk Region and I joined accordingly. My assignment



## MEMORIES OF A POLISH SOLDIER ON THE EASTERN FRONT DURING =WORLD WAR II=

was to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment in May 1943. In June 1943, I was assigned to the Non-Commissioned Field Academy of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment. The remaining Pulsakowski brothers along with their neighbor were assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, and in June to the Non-Commissioned Field Academy. Along with them came a small group of young men who decided to join with them the Polish Army. Among them was a tall handsome 24 year old man by the name of Jozef Pawlowski, who served as a Junior Cadet in the pre-war Polish Military Academy, taken prisoner by the Russians in 1939, but managed to escape from the lines of marches, and came to Lwow where he resided until his deportation in May 1940, when rounded up by the NKVD and transported to a Slave Labor Camp in Siberia as a civilian avoiding the massacre of Katyn Forest where thousands of Polish Officers lost their lives in 1940. On the 15<sup>th</sup> July 1943, at the swearing in ceremony, he was designated by the Division Commander to be the Standard carrier representing the First Polish Division.

As always, "God works miracles." All three Pulsakowski brothers survived the war, and many years later reunited with their mother in Poland. I served with Adolf and Richard Pulsakowski from the day of my induction into the First Polish Division, and assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> infantry regiment. They were assigned to infantry, and I was with the 82mm(millimeter) Mortar Company.

All three of us left the encampment on September 1<sup>st</sup> 1943 to face the German Ninth Army Group Center on the Orsha – Smolensk front line. This Army was our opposition for the duration of the war, until they were defeated, and capitulated in the city where World War Two was planned and implemented with the destruction of the European Jewry and millions of Christians and other Nationalities.

The day following graduation we were assigned to frontline positions. I with the Mortar Company until November 1943, then I was reassigned to the first Artillery Regiment with its 122mm 3 ton Howitzer cannon with a crew of 16 men. This was my assignment for the duration of that horrendous conflict of World War Two, up to my discharge in September 1945.

This assignment to Battery No 2 of the First Artillery regiment brought me into contact with Lt. Jozef Pawlowski of Battery No 3. We became close friends to the end of the war. At one point between October and December 1944, while on duty in Praga-Warszawska, on the right bank of the river Wisla (Vistula) just opposite the Capital of Warsaw, I custom made a uniform for him and myself, which lasted us throughout the rest of the war.

As a footnote, Lt. Jozef Pawlowski, was the same one assigned to carry the Division Standard for the swearing in ceremony on July 15<sup>th</sup> 1943.



MEMORIES OF A POLISH SOLDIER ON THE EASTERN FRONT DURING  
=WORLD WAR II=

When the war ended, we all received different assignments. I was very involved with soccer and was assigned as a member of the first division team to play with the inter divisional teams, and then the regular civilian soccer teams to bond friendship between the military and the civilian population, and to entertain the public and the military. That was my assignment until my discharge.

I never intended to stay in the Army. I volunteered, not for any adventure, but rather, for patriotism, for my old country, and get reunited with my family with whom I had no contact, except for the two postal cards back in February of 1941 from my mother and my younger brothers,. I received them in the labor camp. It was forbidden to reveal the location of the camp, so my mother in reality had no idea what I was doing there.

Upon my discharge, the most important thing for me was to start a new life and somehow forget the war, its atrocities and the thinks one human being did to another one. The fact is that the war followed me for the next 15 years and beyond. How can one forget what he or she lost so abruptly and so precious. How can you explain to you children when they ask you innocently how come that we don't have any grandma or grandpa ? How can one forget the extermination camp, or the ditchers full of bodies in them. How can one forget the liberation of millions of people crying uncontrollable, how can one forget the half starved women in the Concentration Camp "Sachsenhausen" only 35 miles from Berlin, or the denial of the citizen of Oranienburg where this camp was located, that they had no idea what was going on there from 1933 until April 19, 1945. And yet we cannot live with the past, we must continue, we must fight "Hatred" we have to forgive. We must never, never forget, we must educate tolerance to our children at home and in schools, and we must be vigilant what is going on in our area, because a small fire spreads very quickly.

MEMORIES OF A POLISH SOLDIER ON THE EASTERN FRONT DURING  
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Final preparations for emigration to the United States of America began on February 21, 1946, with registration at the American Consulate in Munich Germany.

It is a long process and it takes a long time until you are notified by the Consulate to report. Medical examination followed, then the interview by the Council. Indeed a nerve wrecking process. Rumors spread very quickly about the interviewing counselor which one is the best. My term came to report to # 72 rumors were that he was very strict with details. My interview was conducted in German answering each question perhaps 45 minutes, then the final one was: will I be willing to serve if our Nation will call upon you?

The answer was affirmative. And that was the last question, pending all medical reports.

Few weeks latter we were both approved, and on February 18, 1947 we had to report to the "Funk Caserne" a DP Camp in Munich, Germany, this was our last step before living Germany. On March 17, 1947 we received our Visa, rather a Certificate # 16107 from the American Consulate General in Munich, Germany Mr. Walley Clark.

The Displaced Person Camp actually was a German military base. After the war there were so many people liberated from labor camps, that the UNRA organization converted the available quarters. All these facilities had hospitals and doctors in them, mostly military personal. Funk Caserne served mainly for people in transit as emigrants or as returnee back to their homeland.

On April 4<sup>th</sup> 1947, we left the "Funk Caserne" (DP Camp) "displaced person camp" in Munich, Germany, for the Port of Bremen, on the Atlantic Coast awaiting our final destination to New York City, USA. We, myself and my wife Ruth departed Bremen on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 1947 for a 10 day trip. It was a beautiful Spring Day with many good wishers waving good-by. They were all strangers to us, and most of them were awaiting their own departures. This was the happiest moment in our young lives, even so of not knowing what to expect on our arrival in New York.

We left Germany with two suitcases and empty pockets. Our fortune was \$20 given to us for good luck by our relative. Both of us had relatives in the USA. My wife Ruth had three uncles in St. Louis, and I had one uncle in Brooklyn, N.Y.

During our stay in the DP Camp the HIAS organization which stands for "Hebrew International Assistance Society". Their aim was to assist and reunite lost families in the USA and elsewhere, in the world, regardless of race or religion. They also paid our fare but I repaid them so that they could bring home another family, and joined them with a membership to this day. For over 100 years HIAS assists people in need regardless of nationality to this day.

Three days into the trip, we were notified via a telegram that the people from Hias were successful in locating my uncle. He was my father's twin brother Ignatz he and my father served in the Austrian Army during World War One under their original name Storch. They served from 1914 in the infantry in different units. My father was wounded badly in 1918, his brother was taken prisoner of war by the Russians, and sent to Siberia from



where he escaped and assumed his mothers maiden name, which was Mintz, and retracted his way back to Poland, Austria and Berlin Germany from where he emigrated in 1920 to New York via Ellis Island. My father had an older sister residing with her family in Vienna, Austria. Her family consisted of her husband two daughters and three sons. They were well off before the German occupation in 1938. In 1942 the entire family was taken to different concentration camps like Teresinstat in Chechoslovakia, Bergen Belsen, Germany and one camp in Holland, except for the oldest son he was ably to leave Vienna in 1938 to England where he joined the Army, and when the war ended, he emigrated to Palestine. They were a lucky family even so that they lost the oldest daughter Rita her baby child and her husband. All three died in Auschwitz in 1943.

My ant Malvina her husband and the youngest daughter survived in concentration camp Westbroock, Holland, they were liberated by the US soldiers, except that my uncle past away just two months after liberation. The two other sons Bruno and Max survived in Bergen Belsen and were liberated by the British troops in late April 1945. Not to many European Jewish families were as lucky as the Schlachet family. My fathers, father and his mother died before World War One.



### My mothers family including her parents were :

My mother Helena came from a large family two sisters and four brothers. My mother was the oldest of the siblings. My mother married my father in 1919, they had five boys Josef born in 1920, myself in 1922, Dudek in 1924, Wilek in 1927, and Leon in 1930, At the end of the war in 1945, only I survived. My mothers sister Paula and her husband had three children two daughters Cesia born in 1926, Hanna born 1929 and son Josef born in 1935. My mothers sister Esther, emigrated to Palestine in 1928 before departing Bochnia she worked as a accountant in a local Bank, eventually she married her husband Robert In 1932 they had three daughters and each of them has three grown children they all have families, and reside in Israel. All highly educated professionals, and all reside in the Tel Aviv area.

My mother had also four brothers except for two, all of them perished in Belzec and Auschwitz in the years 1942-43.my uncle Moniek with whom I apprenticed from November 1937 until August 31, 1939. He had a wife Lena and 2 year old child Rosa they all perished in 1942, and Max with wife Sarah and five year old son Daniel, they perished in Belzec, Poland in 1942. Uncle David and his wife Cesia, uncle Sam his wife Maria and I left home together on September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1939 we all survived, since then David and Cesia past away in Rockland County. I estimate that my family lost over 100 relatives known to me.

I tried to avoid this subject for over 40 years, then I realized the sin I be committing by not revealing the past, so that the generations to come perhaps will recognize the legacy left them, and the importance of connecting to the roods from the past.

When you are a teenager, your interests are only yours, perhaps not observing what you family is doing and the sacrificing your parents are making on your behalf.

I remember that myself and my brothers received all the necessary things from our parents, and as much as they could effort. Things changed when my father took ill in 1937, and after few months he past away. I had no idea about my fathers financial situation. My father was in transportation business mainly horses. When I was about 8-9 years old my father had two trucks one was a Chevy and the other a Citron a French moving van.. My father was not a driver; therefore, he had to hire two drivers and helpers for the operation.

Being nine years old, I was only interested of sitting next to the driver, and observing every movement he made. As I remember we had the trucks until about 1933. The moving van was involved in an accident that occurred in early spring. The culprit was a horrendous fog. The driver lost control, and wound up in a deep ravine, in critical condition

The Van was a total loss. I remember sorting out parts nuts and bolts. After that accident, my father bought four teams of horses and large wagons for transportation, moving merchandise. As I remember he continued with this enterprise until he fell ill, and had to sell this operation. As for myself, between the years of 11 – 15, I continued in school and



have joined the Zionist organization for sport and development. Unfortunately, Jewish kids in Poland could not join a Boy Scouts. In the organization we learned Hebrew, sang songs in Hebrew, strict discipline, smoking was forbidden, and promised that one day Jews will have their own country " Eretz Israel." Many boys and girls emigrated to Palestine to join the "Kibbutz" just like my Esther, to build a homeland just like our forefathers did Six Thousand years ago.

When my father got ill in December 1936 and past away in August 1937, from lung cancer, all my dreams were interrupted. I finish my education that summer of 1937, and began apprenticing in a large plumbing company. This place was located 44 km south of Bochnia, my hometown. The owner of this firm was my grandmother's cousin, and they were very close. He employed 32 mechanics. As a matter of fact, his brother was the first Jewish Judge in Kracow his name was Leon Warenhaupt. I was apprenticing from June 1937, until November 1937. Each day I had to get up at 5 AM walk to the train 2 miles, be on time for the 6:45 departure and start work at 8:am. I have lost lots of weigh during that time, and on doctors advice my mother urged me to quit and look for another profession. I was devastated with my mother's decision. I loved what I was doing, I was proud of the special uniform I wore to and after work and evening to school, but I realize that it was very hard for me to continue at that pace.

In December 1937, my uncle Moniek approached my mother with a proposition of changing from plumbing to "Custom Tailoring". Somehow this proposal this not sit with me. How could I change from a ranch to a tiny needle and a timbale? But in those days you don't object to you mother and I accepted it. It was not an easy transition for a 15-year-old kid. Not because of the professional transition, but rather immediate break in relationship with your brothers family and friends, and your are in a strange large city 135 miles away from them. When in school you deal with your own size and age but in my case I had only adults twice my age. So it took me a while until I joined a sport club, and found my own kind. I must say that my outlook to life was always positive, and I made my adjustments in positive way. Never ever did I complain to my mother that I was not happy.

This Upper Silesian Region had heavy industry like steal and coal and other items associated with the industry. The city named Chorzow, located three miles from the German border, had a mix population Poles and Germans with a population of about 160,000. As for my apprenticing I had smooth sailing, and good teachers all six of them, but it was not for free. These days in Europe we did not have automatic steam. What we had for ironing was a heavy steal iron heated on a hot plate fueled with coal .The iron had a separate handle to prevent burning your hand while pressing. Because of no steam, we had to use cured linen rags wet drip free to avoid damaging the fabric. My job was to reciprocate to the master tailors for their professional advice and prepare them the linen rags. My progress continued in high speed and by June 1939, I was able to construct a complete garment and had the knowledge about the fabrics and the ingredients necessary for construction. Fabric and the ingredients go hand in hand together in designing and construction of your creation.



I continued with my education to the last day of August 31<sup>st</sup> 1939. The next day on Friday September 1<sup>st</sup> about 3 AM, Poland was invaded by the German Army and World War II began, and from that day on, peace in Europe was uprooted and tragic events took place with the destruction of properties, dignity, freedom, Poland losing almost 11,000,000 people among them almost the entire Jewish population and my ordeal began. Being all by myself, I had to make instead decision what to do. You see I was in my uncle's large apartment by myself. None of us suspected an invasion by the German Army, so my uncle and his family were on vacation visiting the family in Bochnia, where his and my parents resided. The details of the trip are described at the beginning of this book.

When I left Poland in January 1946, I did so with a heavy heart and apprehension and how could I forgive the German people so soon after I had witnessed what the German soldiers did to the European communities and murder so many innocent lives. I will able to live among them and converse with them. My first encounter after my discharge with the German nationals was, on the trip from Poland to Germany when I met them in a railroad car. The trip was a short one from Breslau Poland to Munich Germany, and I avoided eye contact as much as possible.

Upon arrival to Munich, we were met by the representatives from the UNRA and by the representatives from the Jewish Committee from Munich. They gave us assignment to a DP Camp in Bad Reichenhall in south Bavaria, a short distance from Berchtesgaden, and Hitler's summer residence. In the DP camp we lost immediate contact with German population.

But my motto was to believe that not every German was guilty in the atrocities committed by some of the soldiers in Europe. After about 4 months in the camp we decided to move back to Munich with the help of some friends. We found an apartment in a very nice neighborhood among all international consulates, true the Jewish community in Munich,

and we lived there until our departure to the Funk Caserne in February 1947.



### Our arrival in New York City

The trip to the United States took us ten stormy days. As I remember just about five hours into our voyage my wife Ruth became valiantly sea-sick which lasted 9 days, after that the ship captain personally greeted her on the ships deck. The Marine Perch was a military ship with three layer of bunk beds for the men and 2 layer bunks in the upper level for the ladies. Filed to capacity with newcomers, most of them were sick in different stages. I was among the few lucky ones. The food was excellent for those who could consume it and plentiful, plus soft drinks dessert and coffee. For those with money on board you could buy many things tax free including cigarette a carton of 10, for \$1 dollar. Our arrival was on time about 1:30 P.M. April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1947, the disembarkation took a long time, it was done in alphabetical order. I remember arriving in the dark to my uncles house in Brooklyn. For the first time I was introduced to Brooklyn's rush hour traffic.

After a few hours we were introduced to our uncle and his wife. Immediately we were right at home. We were able to speak German with my uncle and Russian with his wife. Their children ages Phillip 23, Ben 21, Selma 16, spoke only English. But the atmosphere was warm and through translation we accomplished our needs. My uncle during the war worked in the Brooklyn shipyard as a steam fitter building war ships. They had a modest income and a small 3 bedroom apartment in a private house. They took us under their wings and we were accepted in to their family as one. My two older cousins took quarters in their friends homes for the duration of our stay. The following week I got a job and asked my uncle to look for a furniture room with cooking privileges for us and three weeks latter we moved, just a few blocks away. My job was in Long Island City and the travel time was 1 1/2 hours each way by subway, changing on 42 Str. That continued until we moved to the Bronx, in Oct. 1947 sharing a large apartment with newly arrived my wife's sister Bertha her husband Adolf and 8 year old son David. We lived there until May 1948 then we moved on our own to Washington Heights, 167 Street in New York City I had also changed my job. My new employee was Ladies Custom Tailor on 66 Str. and Lexington Ave. New York City. On the 9<sup>th</sup> November our first child was born Gita Helen named after my wife's mother who perished in Treblinka 1943 and my mother had the same faith in Belzec, in Aug. 1942.

Mona and Sam also arrived in June of 1947 and eventually we all moved into the same building on 172 street Fort Washington Ave. in Washington Heights, NY our son Larry was born in 1954, each of us had two children in various stages. In 1962 my second uncle arrived from Israel with his family, and that completed the full circle of events.

My first impression of New York were the tall buildings and wondering who lives in them, and the apprehension set in what will I do there with out knowledge of a language.? On our arrival in the New York Harbor the happiness and the fright were simultaneously visibly and unbelievably and that our dreams finally came true, and we will be able to start fresh after so many years of uncertainties and sufferings. Then I was promised by the social representative that my uncle Mintz will be there. How will I know who is uncle Mintz if I don't have a photo nor description of him. We were given name tags before boarding this huge ship, with some 3,000 passengers on board. Indeed we were so happy to get reunited with our new family. Our uncle and aunt past away, but they left a legacy



for us to follow. Their warm hospitality lives on, with us, our children and grandchildren. There you have two people who had a small apartment taking in two strangers, because we never met before, and they gave us a roof over our hats and installed confidence in me that things will work out for us. And as you can see they did.

We established our roots in New York City. Our children attended New York Public Schools, Colleges, Universities choosing individual professions from doctors, engineers, judges teachers and a vice president of Phillip Morris and this is only the first generation. We are very proud of our new generations. They all followed the educational road and family values to this day, and I know that the next generation will do same. The foundation is laid, the principles are set, the only thing we all need is to have good health to see the results. One member of the second generation is missing, but he will never be forgotten. Eric Lehrfeld, perished so prematurely during the attack of the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001 he left us his legacy his darling daughter Laura, who will continue to follow in his foot steps and create a better world.

In 1950 Sam and I joined up in partnership venture of custom made ladies clothes. Our first business was on Division Street Downtown in East New York, then we moved Uptown to 250 West 72 Street, New York, then to 210 west 72 Street, finally in 1960 to 770 Madison Ave. New York. In 1965 I decided to move to the suburbs, and we chose Rockland County, New City, NY. In 1966, our daughter Gita Helen graduated Hunter High School in New York City, and was admitted to Vassar College, Master from Columbia 1972, Master from New York University 1975. Our daughters wedding took place on March 1969 to Richard Morris, Happy arrival of Robert Minh Morris from Vietnam on December 1974, Robert's wedding to Lya November 13, 2000.

In 1966 our son Larry Gerald entered Felix Fasta Jr. High, in New City, NY. Graduated Clarkstown North High school in 1972, entered Vassar College, graduated in 1976, continued for Master at Duke 1978, Wisconsin Law 1983, wedding in July 1978, to Jeannette, son Joshua was born 1987, daughter Rebecca, 1990.

I continued to travel each day to New York until March of 1970, when I decided to make my live easier and establish my own business in Rockland County, where I continued until 1984 when I chose semi-retirement. Myself and my wife Ruth were always involved in helping others. We joined, and became founding members of the New City Jewish Center, Ruth is a live member of the Hadasah.

I have joined the Jewish war Veterans of the United States, which is the oldest service organization in the USA, organized in New York City in 1896, by 63 Veterans to fight accusations that Jews never served in the armed forces. I joined my Post 756, served in every echelon and continued advanced in every aspect of it assuming the highest leadership position in the State as the Department of New York Commander, and various National appointments and committees. Elected by all Veterans Organizations in Rockland County as the Veteran of the Year for the year 2005. I'm actively involved lecturing to students, West Point Cadets, adults and organizations on atrocities committed by the Nazis during World War II, and the Hate in extreme. The main event came on January 24 2005, when I was invited by the Bnai' Brith International to address members of the United Nations and Dignitaries as part of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Liberation of Auschwitz Concentration Camp on January 27, 1945, by the same troops who liberated my home town of Bochnia, Poland on January 17, 1945.



## My Recollections and Reflections from the past and in to the future;

Turning the pages back to the 1930's I had a wonderful life growing up with out discrimination or hate. Thank God I have very good memory, and I can recall almost everything from my childhood. I attended the Public school in my city of Bochnia, Poland. On average we had between 6 and nine Jewish students in my class of about 40. Poland is a Catholic country, and the Jews were in pre-1939 the second largest minority with 3,500.000 people with equal rights and obligations. Each day before the class began, Catholic prayers were resided by the Catholic students, while the Jewish and other minorities were standing at attention. In Poland the school week was six days. The Jewish students were excused, from attending on Saturdays, as we had a six day school week, but I had to obtained that day's homework from my schoolmate.

As I remember, we as Jewish boys never received derogatory remarks from our Christian students. The same was true as a teenager. Unfortunately my teen years were drastically shortened by World War II, I was then only 16 years old, and by 17, I was a lumberjack in a Siberian Penal Labor Camp. That period I would like to forget, but how can I... It will always remain with me.

To be in a wild forest when you are only about 5ft 5, surrounded by a thick wild brush. Looking up the trees they were practically reaching up to sky's, a decision had to be made which direction the a tree would fall, was a tall responsibility for a city kid of 17. Granted, that we received proper instructions from a Russian pro, and you had a team of 3 men, but mistakes were made. Once the tree was down it had to be processed by removing all the branches and the tree bark, with a special two handle half round manual tool. All tools were manually operated. No electric tools were available to us, I don't even know if they had any of them. Each tree down was judged and determined by a Russian supervisor for its use and destination. None of us received a single penny for this job. The only thing I got was clothes, shoes, cafeteria food a bed with a straw mattress and huge "bedbug's" no radios, movies or newspapers were supplied for us.

That assignment continued from May 1940 until November 1941. Each worker had to fulfill its daily quota, if not achieved, you faced a lecture by the KBG(NKVD) always middle of the night, and food reduction if repeated the second time. I never faced that, and not to many of us did. There were ways how to sabotage the production quota. Each time the lumber was inspected, a build in stamp on a steel hammer was pressed on by the official at the end top of the lumber When the time came that one needed to fulfill his quota, we cut about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch by removing the stamp mark, and presented it to the inspector. The food was very poor. Practically no meat in the soup, milk was only for mothers and children no butter, sugar was only given by a spoon, bread was rationed, and with this hard labor, the truth be known I don't know how we did it. Only with hope and dreams we made it.

We were not discriminated religiously and you practiced if desired in private. We did not have churches or synagogues. In our camp we had few payees men from small ethnic



towns, so we were able to conduct daily and Sabbath services without advertising them. From February 1941, if you had fulfilled your obligations, you received a special pass to travel to the Capital of this region, some miles away. We see we were not allowed to have any soviet "Maps", so it was impossible to know the distances or the locations from one place to another. In my case only when I entered the military I was able to determine our location, and beyond. As it turned out, because this was a family camp, life was much easier for me. If I would have been just one year older when I was picked up by the KBG I would have been sent to a "single men camp" they were hundreds miles north from central Russia and the outcome could have been different, and perhaps even fatal. Thousands of young men died there from exposure, malnutrition and hunger. That is why I believe that I was destined to survive. While in camp back in January 1941, we were allowed to write to our families back in Poland, and I was able to send few postal cards to my mother and in return I have received two cards from my mother and my brothers. We were not allowed to revile the name of this place, and I had to sweeten my situation, otherwise this card would have never reached my mother. My mother assured me that they were doing fine, even offered to send me a package. I refused her offer because it would never reach me. That was the only and the last time I had contact with my family. In March 1941 situation in our camp had changed, due to the political situation between Germany and the USSR.

It is amazing how our political situation had changed between the camp authorities and their victims. From that day on, we were allowed to organize entertainment groups. Friendly approach from the KBG officials, and convincing persuasions about the need of our product by the USSR more than ever during these trial days when the Nazi war machine is planning an attack on our motherland was reiterated to us by the KBG Staff in a friendly way. I and the rest of the camp inmates had no idea of the situation in our homeland. Knowing the history of German expansion I was positive that they will attack the USSR, the same way as they did to Poland in 1939, while having had signed a non-aggression pact in 1937, and breaking it without declaration of war in September 1<sup>st</sup> 1939, the same way in Chechoslovakia and Austria.

I continued with my routine, plus extra night work loading trains with lumber when the train had arrived. It was bitter cold at night windy and below freezing. This job was very hard. We did not have anything mechanical like a crane lifting the lumber on the train. The loading was done manually with assistance by dozens of inmates.

This process continued until my departure and freedom for all inmates of our camp between October & November, 1941. That was the day we all had waited for, and when it came it hit us all like a ton of bricks. I was not surprised by this event, I was expecting it. When you are in your own home or country someone is waiting for you, in my case I was transported thousands miles from my home, lost everything, and then I had to depart onto the unknown. There was no advice, no maps, limited amount of money, and hope. The USSR a power house was in trouble, the Ukraine, White Russia, part of Central Russia and Caucasus was almost lost, and Nazi Army just few miles away from Moscow. Myself with millions of USSR citizens in pursuit of safety, without regular transportation, but they knew where they were going, but we did not. So we decided to follow them. The Russian



people were very worm and helpful to our needs. So we decided to follow them and arrived in Uzbekastan, just few miles from Kabul, Afganistan.

My own intentions to go to Central Asia were, to find the Polish two divisions mainly the Fifth and the Sixth infantry divisions who organized on the Volga River near cities of Kulbishew and Saratow in the USSR, in 1941 – 42. They left ahead of the approaching German Army operating near the city of Stalingrad on the Volga River.

I will not go into the details of events, because I described them in previous pages of this book. When I arrived in Yagonvile in Central Asia, the encampment of the fifth and sixth Polish Division's under the Command of General Wladislaw Anders, a survivor of the Katin Massacre, of 1940 in the USSR. By the time I reached the place, the two divisions departed for Persia, Palestine and Britain.

My second chance came in November 1942, when I was notified by the Polish Authorities, that a First Polish Infantry Division will be organizing in Central Russia. Again all detail of that encounter is described in previous pages.

As you can see it ended for me in the same country where it began six years later minus my home and the people in it. I had a bumpy ride but it ended well.

I was grateful to the Polish institution for organizing a fighting army and for the chance of liberating virtually millions of oppressed, deprived of liberty and dignity.

My special thanks to the United States and Britain for giving me and others the liberty way back in 1941, and the nutritious food and support we received during the war in the Polish Army.

I wished that I could had done more than I did, but as we all know in a war of that magnitude there are no winners, but only lucky survivors.

How can I better express myself to abolish “HATE”. Hate of any kind in our daily lives innocently repeated every day, has to be eliminated from our vocabulary.

As soon as we will reach that point, that we are all humans created by one God in the same image with diverse religion, or, with out, but we are not better then others, our problem with HATE will automatically disappear.

I'm not an educator or a scalar. I'm a survivor of World War Two, and an eye witness to the atrocities committed by the Nazi regime, and their collaborators. I was blessed with my survival, and never will I forget all others who tried, but fell in the battle for freedom. They will remain in my prayer. I was trying to describe my account of that era the best I could of that the must difficult, and complex period in our time.



THE DAY THE LAST SHOT WAS FIRED BY HOWITZER BATTERY # 2  
MAY 2<sup>nd</sup> 1:59 A.M. 1945 BERLIN, GERMANY

I will retract my movement thirty days prior to that event, going back to April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1945 the place "Paulusdorff "Eastern Pomeria, Germany" near the Baltic Sea. I have just captured, Ten SS soldiers and one Captain from the SS Himler Panzer Division, when they managed to escape after their tank's became disabled by our anti tank artillery, and were hiding in a barn near our positions.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 1945 at 4:00 A.M. 40.000 Cannon and Rockets opened fire on the enemy across the River Odder, the deepest and the wider in Germany. This was the last offensive of the war on this front. By 7 A.M. my Battery crossed the river on a make shift pontoon bridge. There were many casualties inflicted by the enemy, but our offensive continued, and on the 19<sup>th</sup> April I reached the City Oranienburg, and the last Concentration Camp I was involved liberating during World War Two "Sachsenhausen" was build by the Nazis in 1933-34. I will not repeat what transpired there, because I had done so in previous pages.

By the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 1945, I have reached the outskirts of Berlin under very heavy Artillery , Mortar, and Tank assault with very heavy losses, but our attack continued regardless of losses. The objectives were to close the ring, and encircle the enemy inside the city until he surrenders or dies there. I did not know when or how long, and who will remain alive at the end. Only one thing was sure that there was no escape for the enemy, and the duel continued day and night without a stop. Soldiers on booth sides were dying by the thousands, and also were civilians. This carnage continued for Ten more days.....

How can one describe the end of a war that lasted Six Years, and then it ends. The First Polish Division was under the Command of Gen. Zigmund Berling from 3/1943-11/1944 then Gen. Sosnkowski from 11/1944 until the end of war. The First polish Army was attached to the First White Russian Front under the Command of Marshal George Zukow.

The encirclement of Berlin began on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1945. The next 12 days were hell on earth in Berlin. We crossed successfully the River Spree and the Havel Canal under very heavy fire with enemy shells falling left and right all around in the water. As soon as my cannon reached the land, we assumed offensive positions and the bombardment of Berlin began day and night moving forward, by the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 1945 my cannon was shelling the Reichstag where the evil hatred had its start against the Jews and the rest of humanity and implemented by the Nazi Regime.

Maneuvering a three ton Howitzer cannon in street warfare is difficult, stressful mentally and physically. What had transpired at the end as I remember were, hardy embraces, tears of joy, and sadness that so many soldiers had to die just hours or minutes before it ended. You see, my position, and my soldiers were not the same as the US soldiers. They could express the joy they felt and get embraced by the family when discharged. Most of our families were gone, or somewhere dispersed without a trace....



And so the end came middle of the night. A chill ran throughout you body on this hot night, is this a dream, or is it true that the end is real. Not a single soldier wend to sleep that night.

On May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1945 our military position were as follow: Alexander Platz, General Post Office, State Bank, Tieergarten, charred Brandenburg Gate. On may 3<sup>rd</sup> 1945 I was given orders to leave the position for departure to a suburb city of Bernau, to clean up rest, and prepare to depart to Poland on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 1945.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of May we participated in the end of the war festivities, with a Parade and celebration. And so ended the most horrendous period in our lifetime with the loss of over 50 million people wiping out entire communities.

I departed with the cannon for which I had to sign a document in November 1943 that under no-condition will this cannon fall into the enemies hand. I had two special shells for the destruction if time would presented itself. We departed by train to City Siedlce to a pre-war military base some 70 km SW of Warsaw where I got discharge from the Army in September 1945. As it turnout most of us lost the entire families during this tragic period. Some of my soldiers decided on military service, and majority like myself applied for an early discharge. Thank God it ended, prayers were recited and plans for the future and new hope began. Mine decision was made to leave Poland and Europe as soon as possible. The day came in late January 1946.

#### REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST

It is crucial to be specific about the definition of the holocaust that is commemorated during this Days of remembrance. As defined in 1979 by the President's Commission on the Holocaust.

The Holocaust was systematic, bureaucratic annihilation of six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators as a central act of state during the Second World War, as night descended, millions of others peoples were swept into this net of death.

It was a crime unique in the annals of human history, different not only in the quantity of violence the sheer numbers killed – but in its manner and purpose as a mass criminal act organized by the state against defenseless civilian population. The decision to kill every Jew, everywhere in Europe: the definition of Jew as target for death transcended all boundaries. . . . .

The concept of the annihilation of an entire people, as distinguished from their subjugation was unprecedented; never before in human history had an genocide been an all pervasive government policy or religious constrain. . . . .

The Holocaust was not simply a throwback to medieval torture or archaic barbarism but a thoroughly modern expression of bureaucratic organization, industrial management, scientific achievement, and technological sophistication. . . . .

The entire apparatus of the German bureaucracy was marshalled in the service of the extermination process. The Holocaust stands as a tragedy for Europe, for Western Civilization and for all the world. We must remember the facts of the Holocaust, and work to understand these facts. . . . .



## *Survivors of the storm*

Heirs of a culture that thrived in Poland for a thousand years, today's Polish Jews are the remnants of a people virtually destroyed by the Holocaust—much of which was staged on Polish soil. Of the three million who perished, most dwelt in cities or towns. In 1940 they were confined to ghettos, and later exterminated.

Although not revealed by any census, Poland's total Jewish population today is believed to be about 5,000. Most make their homes in Warsaw or Kraków.



*Below: The Soviet advance toward Berlin*





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Below: The Soviet advance toward Berlin





Majdanek Watchtower on the Western Side



xhibit(2)



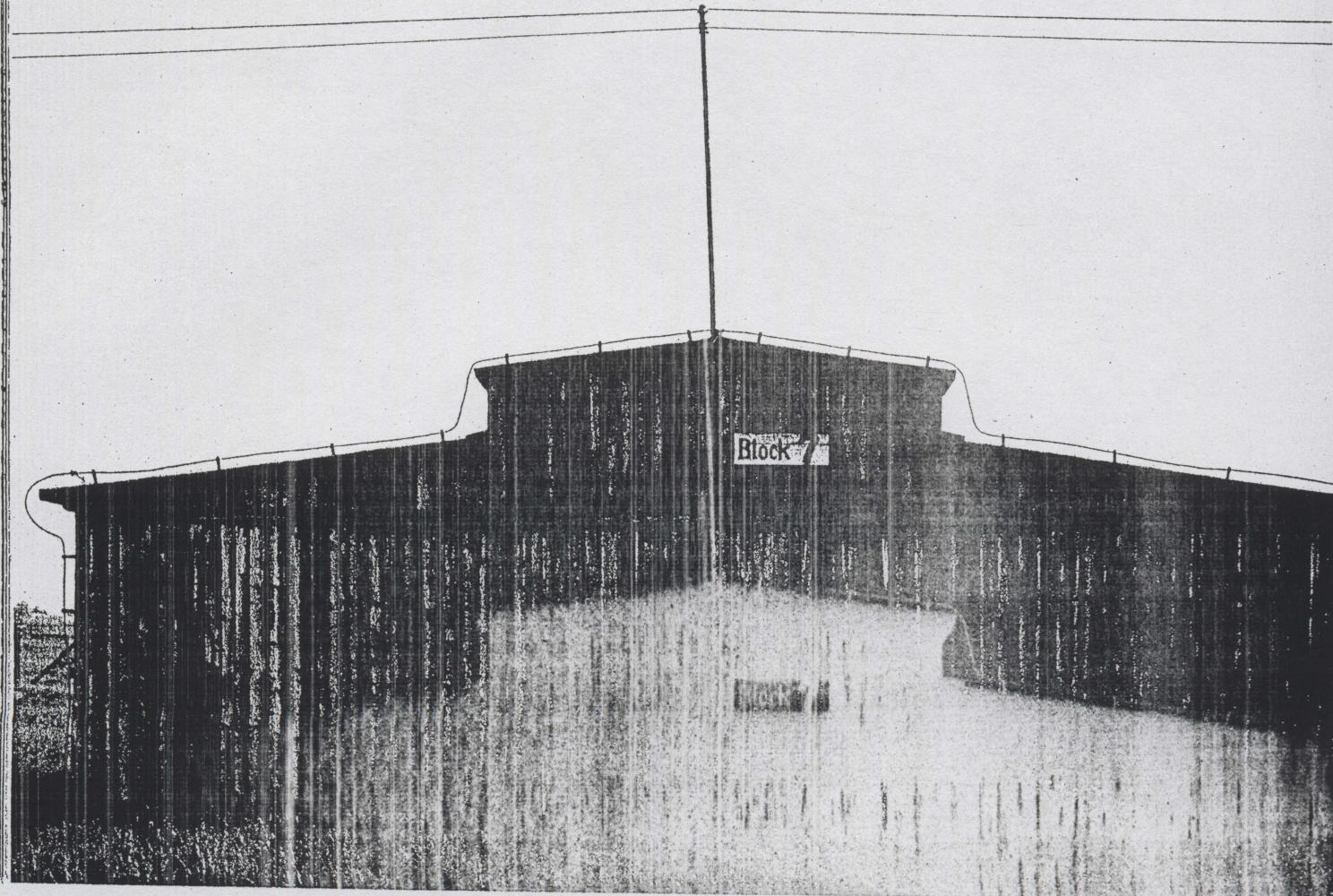
View of Camp Grounds  
same as on July 23, 1944

Lublin-Majdanek



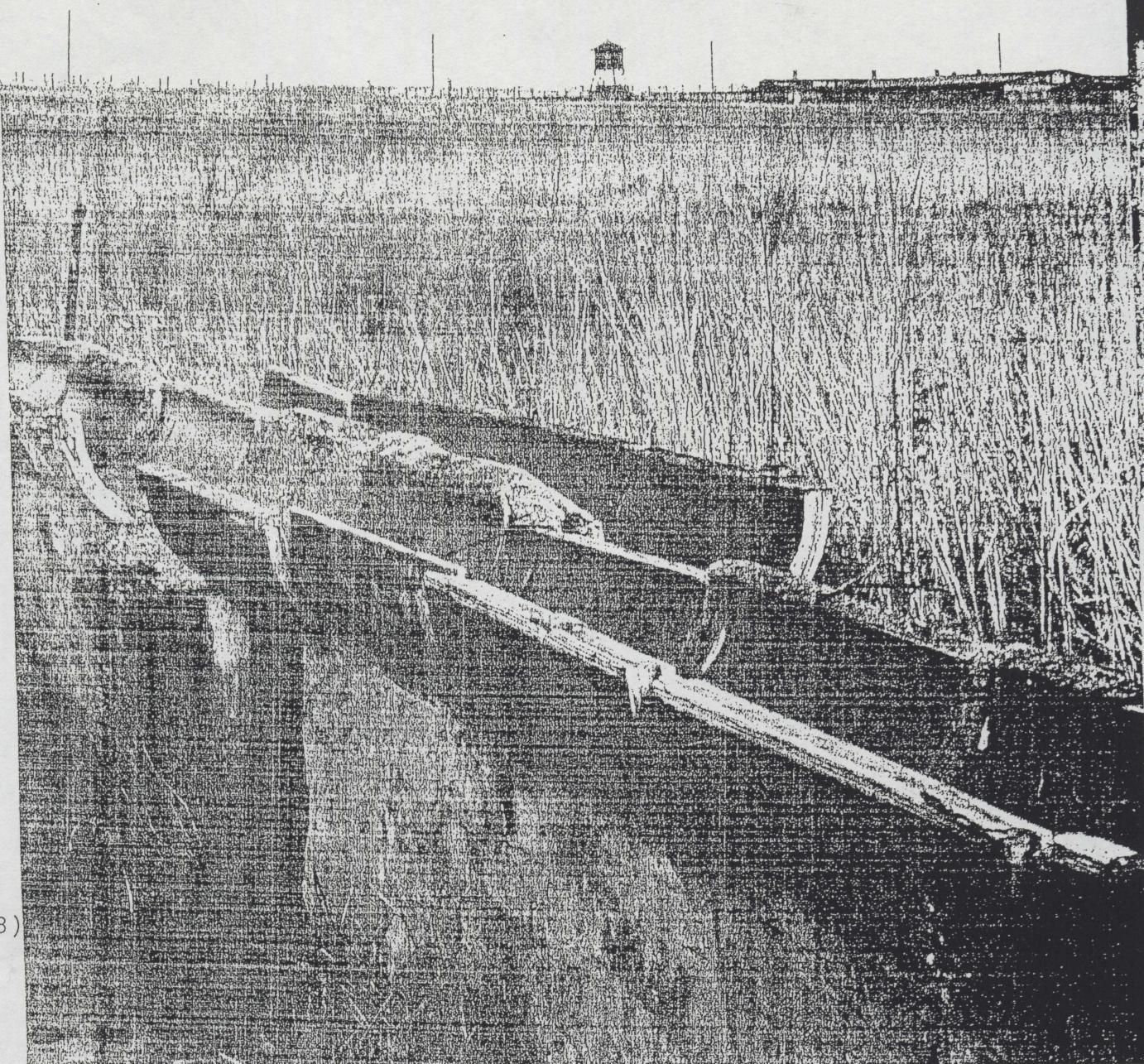


BLOCK X STALL-TYPE BARRACKS  
ON FIELD  
III.





Remains of Barracks with Washbasin



xhibit(3)



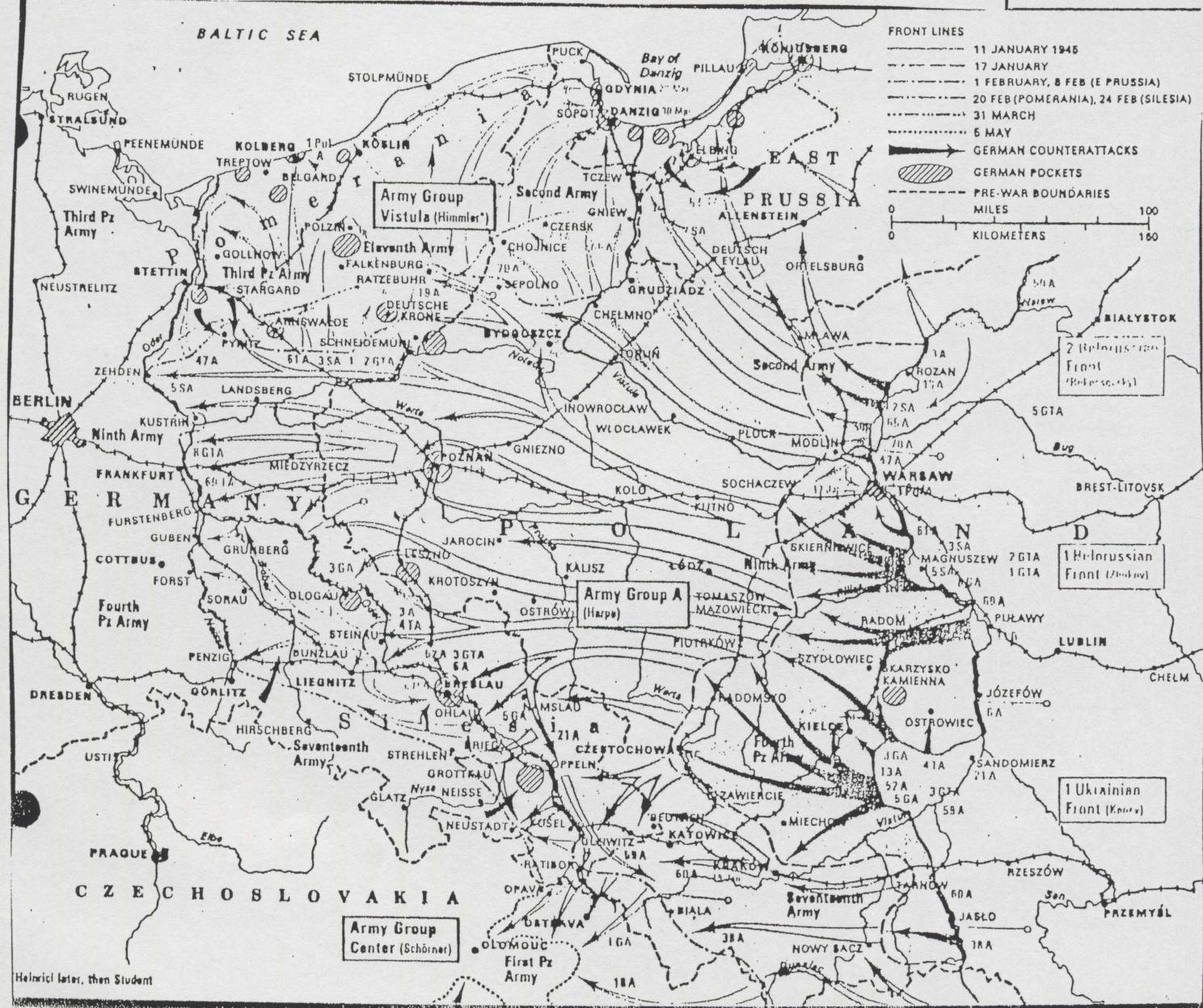
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# THE DISTRICTS

BERLIN  
MAY  
1945

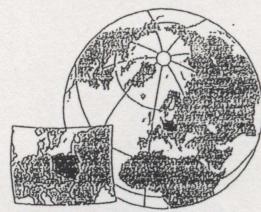
## THE CENTER

THE CITY, 1945



## POLAND

AREA	119,734 sq. mi.
POPULATION	31,161,000
CAPITAL	Warsaw
LARGEST CITY	Warsaw 1,221,900
HIGHEST POINT	Rysy 8,199 ft.
MONETARY UNIT	zloty
MAJOR LANGUAGE	Polish
MAJOR RELIGION	Roman Catholic



Dießen, 29,300	C 3	Koszalin, 50,000	C 1
Elblag (Elbing), 83,200	D 1	Kraków (Cracow), 505,400	E 3
Erz, 5,300	F 2	Kraków, 13,300	F 3
Erz, 10,700	D 1	Krasnystaw, 11,500	F 3
Gdynia, 150,300	D 1	Krośnica, 23,400	E 4
Gliwice (Gleiwitz), 145,900	E 1	Krotoszyn, 19,000	C 3
Gliwice (Gleiwitz), 24,800	C 3	Krynicka, 9,300	E 4
Głogów, 10,400	B 3	Kulno, 26,900	D 2
Głowno, 12,100	D 3	Kwidzyn (Marienwerder), 21,700	D 2
Głubczyce, 9,100	D 3	Kwidzyn, 16,300	A 4
Głubczyce, 12,500	D 3	Lancut, 10,000	F 3
Gnojno (Gnoien), 46,400	G 2	Landeshut (Kantemir Góra), 19,600	C 3
Goleniów, 11,900	B 2	Landberg (Gorzów Wielkopolski), 61,500	B 2
Gorzków Wielkopolski, 64,500	B 2	Langenbielau (Bielawa), 30,000,000	E 3
Gorlice, 12,800	E 4	Lęczyca, 12,600	O 2
Gostyń, 11,100	E 4	Legnica (Legnitz), 69,800	E 2
Gostyń, 13,300	D 2	Leszno, 30,900	C
Graudenz (Graudenz), 69,500,000	D 2	Lidzbark Warmiński, 11,900	C
Grodziec, 10,500	B 3	Lipno, 10,800	D
Grodzisk Mazowiecki, 19,500	D 2	Lipnica, 21,700	C
Grodzisk Wielkopolski, 8,300	C 2	Lipowiec, 18,300	E
Gródek, 9,000	D 2	Luban, 16,200	C
Grudziądz (Graudenz), 69,500,000	D 2	Lubin, 8,200	C
Gryfice, 11,100	B 2	Lublin, 197,100	C
Gubin, 13,400	B 2	Lubliniec, 17,000	C
Hajnówka, 13,600	F 2	Lubliniec, 15,100	C
Haynau (Chojnów), 10,300	B 3	Lubomia, 1,600	F
Hindenburg (Zabrze), 199,400	A 4	Luków, 12,500	C
Hirschberg (Jelenia Góra), 53,000	B 3	Lyck (Eck), 23,500	D
Hohenalszka (Noworocław), 49,500	C 2	Malbork (Marienburg), 27,200	D
Holzendorf, 13,100	F 3	Marienwerder (Kwidzyn), 21,700	D
Hawny, 13,800	D 2	Międzyrzec Podlaski, 11,900	C
Inowrocław, 49,900	C 2	Międzyrzec, 11,400	E
Jarocin, 17,100	C 3	Mielesz, 24,100	E
Jarosław, 26,500	F 3	Międzyrzec, 19,500	E
Jastk, 12,800	E 4	Miastko Mazowiecki, 21,000	E
Jawor (Jauer), 14,500	C 3	Morąg, 9,900	D
Jaworzno, 57,800	D 3	Morągowo, 11,600	E
Kaczoryce, 13,400	D 3	Mysłyniec, 9,600	B
Jelenia Góra, 53,000	D 3	Mysłibórz, 8,000	B
Kalisz, 74,600	D 3	Mysłynisz (Myslowitz), 42,700	B
Kamienica Góra, 19,600	C 3	Nakło nad Notecią, 15,000	C
Katowice, 282,500	B 4	Nanysłów, 8,900	C
Kedzierzyn, 24,000	D 3	Neisse (Nysa), 26,400	C
Kętna, 9,500	C 3	Neustadt (Prudnik), 18,400	C
Kętrzyn, 17,000	E 1	Neustett (Szczecinek), 25,100	C
Kielce, 10,100	D 3	Nisko, 8,800	C
Klebuk, 10,100	D 3	Nisko, 18,100	F
Kłodzko (Glatz), 24,800	C 3	Nysa (Nysa), 50,500	D
Kluczbork, 14,800	D 3	Nysa (Nysa), 34,500	D
Knurów, 15,700	A 4	Nysa (Nysa), 36,400	E
Koło, 11,600	D 2	Nysa (Nysa), 18,200	E
Kolobrzeg, 20,400	B 1	Nysa (Neisse), 26,400	C
Königshütte (Chorzów), 153,200	B 4		
Konin, 20,800	D 2		
Konin, 20,800	D 2		
Konstantynów, 11,800	D 3		
Kościan, 16,600	C 2		
Kościerzyna, 12,200	C 1		
Koszalin, 8,200	B 2		

PHYSICAL FEATURES	Hel (pen.)	D 1	Prusia (river) .....	C 2	
	High Tatra (mts.) .....	D 4	Ryzy (ml.) .....	F 3	
Allie (Lyna) (river) .....	E 1	Kłodniczki (river) .....	B 4	San (river) .....	F 3
Baltic (sea) .....	B 1	Lyra (river) .....	E 1	Słniadry (Spirding) (lake) .....	E 2
Beskids (mts.) .....	E 4	Manry (Mauer) (lake) .....	E 1	Słokajka (river) .....	F 3
Brida (river) .....	C 2	Narew (river) .....	E 2	Słudzien (ml. range) .....	C 3
Bug (river) .....	F 2	Nesla (Nysa Łużycka) (riv.) .....	B 2	Słudzien (ml. island) .....	E 1
Bzura (river) .....	D 2	Nieleś (Nilze) (river) .....	B 2	Stobie (20,100) .....	B 1
Czarna (river) .....	C 3	Nysa (Nysa) (river) .....	C 3	Wisłka (Wisła) (river) .....	D 2
Drau (river) .....	D 2	Nysa Łużycza (Neisse) (riv.) .....	B 3	Wistula (Wisła) (river) .....	C 2
Drwęca (river) .....	D 2	Oder (Odra) (river) .....	B 2	Warta (Warlike) (river) .....	C 2
Dukla (pass) .....	E 4	Odra (Oder) (river) .....	B 2	Wleprz (river) .....	F 3
Dunajec (river) .....	E 4	Pilica (river) .....	E 3	Wisła (Wisłka) (river) .....	D 2
Gwdia (river) .....	C 2	Pomerania (quiff) .....	B 1	Wkra (river) .....	E 2
				Wolin (Wolin) (isl.) .....	B 2











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